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THE MILLENNIAL HOPE

A PHASE OF WAR-TIME THINKING

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THE MILLENNIAL HOPE

A PHASE OF WAR-TIME THINKING

By

SHIRLEY JACKSON CASE

Professor of Early Church History and New Testament Interpretation in the University of Chicago

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS
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PREFACE

The primary purpose of this book is to answer a single question: Are the ills of society to be righted by an early and sudden destruction of the present world, or is permanent relief to be secured only by a gradual process of strenuous endeavor covering a long period of years?

The stirring events of recent times have given new point to this question. Vigorous propagandists have been urging belief in the speedy end of the world and the hopelessness of any remedial measures for effecting permanent improvement in present conditions. In the name of religion, it is maintained that human efforts to make the present world a safer and better place in which to live are wholly misguided. On the contrary, God is said to will that conditions shall grow constantly worse as the hour of impending doom approaches.

At the present time this pessimistic view of the world is especially pernicious. In principle

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it strikes at the very heart of all democratic ideals. According to its fundamental teaching, God is regarded as an almighty potentate who has foreordained to failure all the efforts of men to establish improved forms of government. For one who holds consistently to this opinion it is nonsense to talk of human responsibility for the betterment of society. This type of teaching, which is being vigorously inculcated in many circles, readily plays into the hands of all enemies of social and political reform. By persuading men that the rapid deterioration and early destruction of the present world are determined upon by divine decree, the enemy of reform has a mighty instrument for strangling the citizen's sense of civic duty. This is equally true whether the call to service is merely local or whether it is national and international.

The following pages are designed to exhibit the fallacious and harmful character of present-day teaching regarding the imminent end of the world. The method of treatment is historical. Different beliefs of this general type current among the ancients are examined in order to discover the specific circumstances which called them into being and their utter futility as

shown by subsequent events. When viewed in this historical setting, the absurdity of attempting to solve modern problems in a similarly fanciful way is readily perceived.

SHIRLEY JACKSON CASE

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CHAPTER I

GENTILE HOPES

What is to be the ultimate destiny of the present world? This question has always made a strong appeal to the popular imagination. This appeal has been especially powerful at those periods in history when shocking calamities have overtaken mankind. Sometimes the shock has been occasioned by dreadful disasters in nature, such as devastating floods, furious storms, or terrifying earthquakes. At other times the imagination has been fired by great social upheavals often accompanied by bloody civil wars or bitter religious persecutions. Again, as in more recent times, attention has been arrested by deadly international conflicts which seemed to threaten with destruction the very foundations of all civilization.

In the presence of dire calamities many persons lose faith in the permanence of the present world. Horrible outbreaks of distress are taken to be symptomatic of an incurable malady which has fastened its deadly grip upon

the whole cosmic order. Since the disease seems too deep-seated to be eradicated by remedial measures, its progress can be stayed only by destroying the object upon which it preys. The only hope for a final triumph over evil is thought to lie in the complete dissolution of the present world and the re-establishment of a new world free from all those calamitous possibilities inherent in the present order of things.

Within Christianity belief in the temporary character of the present age early assumed a form known as the millennial hope. According to this hope, in the more or less distant future the course of human history is to be suddenly halted by divine intervention, when all evil will be abolished and the earth completely renovated. Then Christ will establish upon earth a new kingdom of blessedness to endure one thousand years; hence the designation "millennial" hope.

Is the millennial type of speculation a valid hope for modern times? In recent years the distresses incident to a world-war have given this question new importance. Instead of affirming that modern men are in duty bound to construct a new international order more

carefully safeguarded against the possibility of future disaster, many persons revive ancient millennial expectations and fall back upon a belief that the evils of the present world will shortly be eliminated by the sudden intervention of Deity. To test the validity of this belief is the main purpose of the present inquiry. The method of procedure will be to sketch the origins of the millennial type of hope, to note the function which it has served at different times in the past, and in the light of its history to estimate its value as a modern program for the renovation of the world.

I

Taken in the large, Christian millenarianism is not an isolated phenomenon. While it shows certain very distinctive characteristics, the main problem which it treats and the general type of solution which it proposes are by no means novel. The presence of evil powers in the world has been recognized by practically all peoples even in very elementary stages of cultural development, and the hope of an ultimate deliverance to be effected through a sudden dissolution of the present order is not at all unusual in the history of human thinking.

The ancients held definite though varying views regarding the meaning and outcome of humanity's conflict with a hostile world. Mythology often depicted the emergence of an orderly universe from chaos as the result of a mighty battle between warring deities. These myths reflected in heightened form man's own experiences in his efforts to escape from or to conquer the ruthless powers of nature. He trembled when they displayed their fury in the destructive hurricane, in the blinding lightning, in the deafening thunder, in the terrifying earthquake, or in the devastating flood. Even in the more ordinary experiences of life he often believed himself to be the victim of malevolent powers. Frequently his very existence—to say nothing of his efforts to obtain the luxuries of life—seemed to be threatened by visible and invisible foes.

The issue of life's conflicts was also variously conceived, but the hope of some sort of triumph for humanity was practically universal. Ultimate victory was commonly pictured as the work of beneficent deities who intervened in some unusual manner to rescue men from their distresses. Sometimes final deliverance was predicted simply for the individual soul—a

deliverance to be realized in a blessed abode beyond the grave. At other times a great hero was brought upon the scene to confer present blessings upon humanity, possibly also pointing the way to a happier destiny in the life to come. Still bolder thinkers prophesied the complete destruction of all evils and the final establishment of a new and ideal state of existence for restored humanity upon a renovated earth. Amid all these variations in detail there runs the same scarlet thread of hope, more or less clearly discernible everywhere in the ancient world.

The idea of a divine deliverance was so prominent in the surroundings of the early Christians, and their own daily experiences often proved so very distressing, that they also were impelled to speculate about the end of the world. In describing this event they employed imagery already current, adding to it certain new features designed to remedy weaknesses in the program of their rivals and to give greater assurances of fulfilment to the distinctively Christian teaching upon this subject. The very attempt to cope with a familiar problem, and the effort to solve it by offering a rival program of the current type, resulted in considerable

similarity between the views of Christians and those of their contemporaries.

Familiarity with the world of the early Christians discloses, not only the sources of much of their millennial imagery, but also the secret of its effectiveness. This type of teaching originally received powerful impetus from specific historical circumstances, a knowledge of which is absolutely essential to an understanding of its full meaning and value in the early days of the Christian movement. In later times readers of the Book of Revelation, for example, often found themselves unable to grasp the exact meaning of the author or to appreciate the real service which he originally rendered his contemporaries. This failure was largely due to neglect of the actual historical conditions which called forth the book and which make perfectly intelligible both its meaning and its value to the particular groups of early Christians whose specific needs prompted its composition. Similarly, in interpreting millenarianism at successive periods in the history of Christianity, account should always be taken of the peculiar circumstance which revived these daring flights of the pious imagination; and their worth can be appraised only in relation to contemporary

conditions. When removed from their original environment and injected into an alien setting, millennial notions often become meaningless or even absurd.

For the content of their millennial hope the early Christians were indebted most immediately to the Jews, but Jewish hopes had been gradually evolving for centuries while the Hebrews were in close contact with a varied gentile environment. Moreover, Christian hopes continued to expand and function anew as the new religion became an independent movement upon gentile soil. Hence acquaintance with Egyptian, Babylonian, Persian, Greek, and Roman views regarding the ultimate outcome of humanity's struggle with a hostile world is essential for the correct interpretation of both Jewish and Christian teaching on this subject.

While occasionally it may become apparent that earlier gentile hopes supplied the stimulus or the model for similar Jewish or Christian beliefs, it is of much greater importance to understand the general conditions in ancient times which made possible the millennial type of speculation and gave it significance for the ancients. If in modern times those conditions

no longer prevail, it is not surprising that millennial expectations seem to lose their meaning. But it is all the more necessary that the present-day student make himself familiar with the circumstances of the ancients in order that he may more fully and more correctly appreciate both the origin and the functional significance of Jewish as well as Christian hopes of the millennial type in ancient times.

II

As life in the fertile Nile Valley was less strenuous than in most of the lands about the Mediterranean, the Egyptians took a somewhat more optimistic view of the universe than did their Asiatic and European neighbors. In the primitive nature-myths of Egypt the notion of struggle is not so prominent as in the mythologies of Babylonia, Persia, or Greece; nor does the idea of an ultimate destruction of the world seem to have been native to Egyptian thinking. Nevertheless, in historical times both the burden of life's ills and the need of divine relief were recognized. In the presence of deplorable social conditions resulting from defective government, an early Egyptian prophet declares his faith in the advent of a new ruler who will save the

people from their distresses. At present normal industrial and commercial activities have ceased, justice has disappeared, blood is everywhere, and the people wander about like shepherdless sheep; but the prophet looks for the coming of a brighter day when a deliverer will arise who will rule justly and bring "cooling to the flame." When a beneficent prince appears who brings these hopes to fulfilment, he is hailed as a mediator of divine help. Merneptah, for example, is called the divinely appointed protector of Egypt who bestows upon the people in an especial measure the favor of the great sun-god Re. Now there is universal rejoicing in the land, all fear of enemies has been removed, lamentation has vanished, the desolated towns are repopulated, and the husbandman enjoys unmolested the fruits of his toil.[1]

Religion also inculcated the idea of a struggle and of a victory to be accomplished through divine assistance. This notion was especially prominent in the popular Isis-Osiris cult which had a wide vogue, not only in Egypt itself, but all about the Mediterranean previous to, and contemporary with, the rise of Christianity. The myths of the cult tell of a fierce conflict

[1] J. H. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, III, 263.

between Osiris, the brother-husband of Isis, and a mighty foe who slays Osiris. But a restoration to life is accomplished by the efforts of Isis, and the slayer of Osiris is finally conquered. The myth really depicts the successful struggle of man against his great enemy death, which is now no longer to be feared, since the heroic divinities, Isis and Osiris, have conquered this foe and provided through the institution of their cult a sure victory for mortals. While this scheme of salvation did not include an ultimate destruction of the world, where death reigned, it did offer to every individual the hope of a blessed immortality in a new world beyond the grave.

III

Babylonian mythology depicts a primitive struggle between contending powers personifying the principles of chaos and order. The triumph of the latter under the leadership of the god Marduk has resulted in the creation of the world and the appearance of mankind upon the earth. Marduk has conquered the powers of chaos, ordered the course of the stars, given shape to heaven and earth, bestowed upon the world fertility and prosperity, and now extends his mercy and compassion toward repentant

sinners. According to this legend a new and ideal order of things to endure forever has now been inaugurated. Even before beginning his triumphant onslaught upon the powers of chaos Marduk is hailed by his fellow-gods as savior, lord, and eternal sovereign of the whole universe:

O Marduk, thou art our avenger.
We give thee sovereignty over the entire universe.
Thou shalt preside in the assembly, thy word is supreme.
May thy weapon never become blunt; may it strike down the foe!
O lord, spare the life of him who trusts in thee,
And pour out the life of the god who seized hold of evil.[1]

On the other hand, in the Babylonian story of the Deluge, man himself is made to participate in the struggle incident to the changing order of things. Looking down upon the world, particularly upon the metropolis Surippak on the shores of the Euphrates, the gods perceived that civilization had become effete and so they resolved to send a flood. All life would have perished had not one prudent man, Utnapishtim, been instructed to build a boat in which he

[1] Morris Jastrow, Jr., in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, extra vol., p. 571.

saved himself, his family, and all kinds of living creatures. As a reward for his service he and his wife were transformed into divine beings and given a special dwelling-place in a distant land "at the mouth of the streams"—apparently a hypothetical paradise near the head of the Persian Gulf. Here they enjoyed a blessed and untroubled existence, but the new lot of their descendants was less ideal. Never again would mankind be destroyed promiscuously, but disasters would fall upon evildoers, lions and leopards would be let loose to devour men, famine and pestilence would come upon the land, and mortals would suffer many ills from which there is no promise of release.

The legend of Ishtar's descent to the lower world discloses still another phase of conflict and triumph pictured by the Babylonian imagination. This mother-goddess was the personification of the vital and reproductive forces of nature. But when she descended to Hades, where she was held captive by the evil powers of the nether world, the vitality of nature waned, deadly winter spread over the land, and the complete destruction of human life seemed imminent. The danger, however, was averted through Ishtar's fortunate escape from "the

house where those who enter do not return." With her release nature's vital powers revived, bringing the joys of springtime back again and insuring to mortals a fresh supply of food as well as an increase of flocks. Thus each year had its period of special distress followed by a season of hope.

The contrast between the times of distress and the age of happiness is not confined to the realm of mythology; it also appears in the annals of Babylonian and Assyrian history. Evil days are predicted when the glory of Babylon will decline under the rule of a prince who will bring upon the people a time of unceasing warfare and slaughter. Men will devour one another, parents will barter away their children, disorders will suddenly overtake the land, the husband will desert his wife and the wife her husband, the mother will bolt the door against her daughter, and a foreign conqueror will overrun Babylonia.

In contrast with the prophecy of evil things during the reign of an incapable prince, other rulers are hailed as divine deliverers who inaugurate a truly Golden Age. For example, Hammurabi, king of Babylon, viewed his rule as the dawn of an ideal régime when the evils of former

days had come to an end with the appearing of the new kingdom of righteousness:

When the lofty king Anu, king of Annunaki, and Bel, Lord of heaven and earth, who determines the destiny of the land, committed the rule of all mankind to Marduk, the chief son of Ea; . . . . when they pronounced the lofty name of Babylon . . . . and in its midst established an everlasting kingdom whose foundations are as firm as heaven and earth, at that time Anu and Bel called me, Hammurabi, the exalted prince, the worshiper of the gods, to cause justice to prevail in the land, to destroy the wicked and the evil, to prevent the strong from oppressing the weak, to go forth like the sun over the black-headed race, to enlighten the land, to further the welfare of the people. Hammurabi, the governor named by Bel, am I who brought about plenty and abundance . . . . the lord adorned with scepter and crown whom the wise god Ma-ma has clothed with complete power.[1]

Similarly in a letter addressed to the prosperous Assyrian king Asurbanipal we read:

Through their infallible oracle [the gods] Shamash and Adad have decreed the rule of my lord the king over the lands [predicting] favorable reign, days of justice, years of righteousness, copious showers, mighty freshets, favorable market prices. The gods are well disposed, fear of God is abundant, the sanctuaries are overloaded. The great gods of heaven and earth have

[1] R. F. Harper, *The Code of Hammurabi*, pp. 3 ff.

announced regarding my lord the king: Old men will leap for joy, children will sing, joyfully will women and maidens give themselves to the duties of wife, and being delivered they will give life to sons and daughters. Animal life multiplies. My lord the king has bestowed life upon him whose sins had destined him for death. Thou hast liberated those who were many years in prison, thou hast given health to those who were a long time ill, the hungry have become satisfied, the emaciated have become fat, the naked have been clothed with garments.[1]

In addition to its myth-makers and its political historians, Babylonia also had its philosophers who offered their interpretation of the ever-present conflict between the world's opposing forces. The Babylonian philosopher derived his wisdom from a study of the stars, whose orderly procedure readily suggested that the universe was not the plaything of chance, but was governed by fixed laws. He who possessed adequate astral wisdom could read these laws, and this knowledge enabled him either to interpret past history or to foretell coming events. Observation showed that changes in the position of the heavenly bodies were attended by corresponding changes in the seasons

[1] R. F. Harper, *Assyrian and Babylonian Letters*, Part I, No. 2, pp. 2 f.

of the year, each season recurring at its appointed time. Thus the life of nature was seen to move in cycles controlled by the orderly movements of the heavens. This fact easily led the astral philosopher to assume that world-history also moved in recurring cycles. Since each year had its days of youth and its declining season of old age, so the world was supposed to pass through a series of births and deaths as the successive world-years came and went.

According to Berosus, a Babylonian priest of the third century B.C., fire and flood alternated in bringing about the end of successive world-eras. When the planets stood in a particular position, the heat of summer would become so severe that all the world would burst out in flame; and at another time, owing to the conjunction of the planets, the winter rains would descend in an overwhelming flood. Berosus was so sure of the accuracy of his observations that he assigned a definite date both for the conflagration and for the deluge.

The foregoing survey shows the peoples of the Tigris-Euphrates Valley to have been fully conscious of the ills that threaten man's life upon the earth. Babylonian nature-myths reflect a primitive age when man's subsistence

was threatened by the devastations of storm and flood or by the rotation of unfavorable seasons. The victory of a gradually evolving civilization was pictorially represented as a heroic triumph of beneficent deities. To be sure, evil had not been completely annihilated, but a new and better age had already been inaugurated. A more advanced stage of reflection appears in historical times, when the hopes of the people are fixed upon some princely deliverer whose favorable rule means millennial blessings for his subjects. Yet the savior-prince is not the ultimate source of help; he is discharging a divine commission, and his reign is beneficent because it is a kingdom of God on earth. In astral philosophy life's immediate ills and immediate blessings figure less prominently, since they are merely incidental items in a great cosmic process. The new world-year may take delight in its youth, but it is destined for decay. On the other hand, the dying world may console itself with the assurance of future renovation. While this program may offer comfort to the cosmos, it contains no consolation for the individual. Those who chance to be alive in the days of the world's youth share temporarily in its delights, but all souls are ultimately

destined for shadowy abodes where they dwell forever in joyless monotony.

IV

The Persians were keenly conscious of a sharp conflict between good and evil in the world. This struggle made a mighty appeal to their imagination, and the course of its progress was portrayed in vivid colors. Both men and divinities were thought to participate in the strife; nor would the conflict cease until the present evil world is miraculously purged of its wickedness, cleansed by the purifying fire of a final judgment, and made the scene of a new kingdom of perfect blessedness.

The notion of a bitter warfare between the powers of light and the powers of darkness lies at the very root of all Persian thinking. At an early date old nature-myths had been transformed into ideal moral struggles between the god of righteousness on the one hand and the prince of evil on the other. The world began with the good god's creative act in producing beings worthy of himself. This was followed by the counter-activity of the evil spirit, who created many demons and fiends to assist him in his malicious designs. Henceforth the con-

flict raged, every move made by the forces of righteousness being offset by some new activity on the part of the powers of wickedness. When the process of creation had advanced to the point where man emerged, he at once became the special object of demonic attack. Ever since his creation he has been a most active participant in the ceaseless moral struggle, arraying himself at will on the side of the good god or on the side of the demons. Thus the world has become a great battleground where God, his angelic assistants, the beneficent powers of nature, and righteous men are pitted against Satan, his demonic allies, malignant natural forces, and evil men.

Persian speculation divided the course of the world's history into four main periods, each embracing 3,000 years. During the first period God's creation remained in a pure spiritual state with intangible bodies which were unaffected by the taint of evil. Then came the material creation, extending over another 3,000 years, during which the will of God was regnant. The third period was one of great distress because the Prince of Darkness now became much more aggressive and filled creation with many miseries. The fourth period, which is the present

age, opened with the coming of Zoroaster, the alleged founder of the true religion, who communicated a new revelation to men and greatly strengthened their powers of resisting Satan and his hosts. After 3,000 years of this struggle have passed, the present world will come to an end. Thus the Persians held the doctrine of the great world-year, an idea which we have already encountered in Babylonia. The four trimillenniums of the Persian system together make a 12,000-year period, which evidently is one world-year of 12 months, each month covering 1,000 years, the months being grouped into four great seasons of 3,000 years each.

Legend subdivided the third of the four great trimillenniums into three different periods, each representing a distinct stage in the history of the conflict between good and evil. The first thousand years constituted a Golden Age ruled by an ideal hero, Yima the Brilliant. He is the fabled educator of the human race, who conferred the blessings of civilization upon men and guided them in the ways of fabulous prosperity. So rapidly did all good things multiply that on three successive occasions, 300 years apart, it became necessary to enlarge the earth in order to make room for the abundant life which it

nourished. The glorious hero and his beneficent rule are thus described:

> Brilliant and with herds full goodly,
> Of all men most rich in Glory,
> Of mankind like to the sunlight,
> So that in his kingdom made he
> Beasts and men to be undying,
> Plants and waters never drying,
> Food invincible bestowing.
> In the reign of valiant Yima
> Neither cold nor heat was present,
> Neither age nor death was present,
> Neither envy, demon-founded.
> Fifteen years of age in figure
> Son and father walked together
> All the days of Vivanghvant's offspring,
> Yima ruled with herds full goodly.[1]

The Golden Age is followed by a thousand years of distress when the power of the demons prevails. During this period the destructive forces of winter are let loose. The pleasant pastures which formerly had been filled with flocks and herds are now buried under snow and ice, great numbers of living creatures perish, and the death-dealing demons spread destruction everywhere. But by a special providence of the

[1] Yasna IX. 4 f., as cited by A. J. Carnoy in *The Mythology of All Races*, VI, 304.

good god a remnant of life from the Golden Age is preserved, stored up in a mythical paradise, where it awaits the restoration of a new ideal order of which it is both the model and the germ. As the end of Yima's reign draws near he is instructed to build an inclosure four-square and as long as a riding-ground on each side. When the structure is completed, it is to be filled with the choicest representatives of all living things gathered by pairs. Yima's instructions are:

> Gather together the seed of all men and women that are the greatest and the best and the finest on this earth; gather together the seed of all kinds of cattle that are the greatest and the best and the finest on this earth; gather together the seed of all plants that are the tallest and sweetest on this earth; gather together the seed of all fruits that are the most edible and the sweetest on this earth. Bring these by pairs to be inexhaustible so long as these men shall stay in the inclosure.[1]

This paradise is to be kept tightly shut until the final destruction of the world's wickedness. Then the inclosure will be opened in order that the renovated earth may be fructified by the pure seed of the holy god's first creation. These traditions regarding a Golden Age and an ideal

[1] Vendidad II. 27 f., as cited by A. J. Carnoy, *op. cit.*, p. 308.

paradise are modeled after the imaginary age of future blessedness for which the struggling spirit of mankind yearned; and this idealized past served in turn as a support for faith in the final triumph of good over evil. What once had been might surely be expected again.

A long period of struggle lay between the Golden Age of mythology and the coming day of the world's final redemption. The one thousand years of darkness which set in with the removal of Yima were followed by another thousand years of struggle. During this time the forces of light made slow headway against the powers of darkness. A new stage in the struggle is marked by the appearing of Zoroaster, who was sent by God to bring the divine revelation to man, thus giving a mighty impetus to the forces of righteousness. His work marks the beginning of the final 3,000-year period which includes modern times and is to close with the catastrophic end of the world, when all evil will be annihilated.

The events connected with the final triumph of God were extensively elaborated by Persian fancy. Shortly before the end the world will suffer great distress, as the Satanic powers make a last gigantic effort at self-assertion. Demonic

hordes will come from the east and from the west, the people will be corrupted through the worship of idols, friends and relatives will become estranged from one another, and a large part of the nation will perish. All nature will be shaken by the shock of battle between the good spirits and the demons of darkness. Temporarily the latter are so powerful that they fill the earth with indescribable sufferings. Pestilences break out everywhere, nature ceases to be productive, rains no longer water the earth, men die of hunger, the brightness of the sun diminishes, the days become shorter, the years pass more rapidly, and the black night of Satanic darkness threatens to engulf the universe.

The terrible conditions of the last times are finally relieved by the appearance of a savior, Soshyans (Saoshyant), who was born in a miraculous manner from Zoroaster's seed, which had been carefully preserved through the centuries by the angels. With the advent of Soshyans and his companions the resurrection of the dead takes place. Throughout the centuries the spirits of the departed had taken up their abode in heaven or in hell, according to their deserts, but now they are reunited with

their former bodies. The bones, the blood, the hair, and the vital force, which had been intrusted to the keeping of earth, water, plants, and fire, respectively, are restored, and each person rises in the place where his death had occurred. With the resurrection the power of death is completely broken. Those who were still alive when the savior appeared also share in this victory over decay and corruption. Each one partakes of the heavenly food of immortality, and never again will the spirit be separated from the body. All peoples, having been taught a common language, with one voice celebrate their triumph by rendering songs of praise to God and to the archangels.

Before the state of final blessedness is attained, judgment must be executed upon sinners, the powers of Satan must be completely crushed, and the world must undergo a process of purification and renewal. After the resurrection all men meet in a common assembly, but the contrast in appearance between the righteous and the wicked is as sharp as that between black and white sheep in the same flock. The good and evil deeds of each are made clearly manifest in the presence of the entire company, whereupon remorse and shame overtake the

wicked while the righteous rejoice in their own good fortune. Then comes the separation when sinners are committed to hell for three days of torment, their terrible punishments being intensified by a clear vision of the sumptuous blessings enjoyed in the meantime by the righteous. After judgment the whole world, hell included, is purified by a baptism of fire, which causes the mountains to pour forth streams of molten metal. This cleansing flood sweeps over all the earth, leveling hills and mountains and purging evil out of sinners, while to the righteous it is as pleasant as a bath of warm milk. Above the earth good and evil spirits fight out their final battle, resulting in the complete rout of Satan and his allies. His power is forever destroyed, he himself is driven back to the lowest pit of darkness whence he originally came, and the regions of hell, now purified by the bath of molten metal, become a part of the new heaven and the new earth which are to endure eternally. Thus the curtain falls upon the last act of the great world-drama.

It is not surprising that the Persians were extremely sensitive to the presence of evil forces in their world, or that they looked to the Deity for a miraculous deliverance from their woes.

Their very environment impressed upon them the seriousness of the conflict, as well as the seeming futility of their own efforts to secure a permanent victory. Nature was far from kindly in the Iranian territory. Men suffered from violent extremes of temperature, the productivity of the fields was often threatened by droughts, to overcome the natural sterility of the soil was a difficult task, beasts of prey frequently endangered the flocks of the herdsman, and robbers found easy shelter in desert places or in the fastnesses of the mountains. Persian national history is also marked by an almost perpetual struggle, not only with less formidable foes from the neighboring steppes, but with such world-powers as Assyria, Macedonia, Rome, and Islam. The preservation of both individual and national life involved a constant conflict with opposing powers. Like many other peoples, the Persians looked to religion for the hope of ultimate escape from their strenuous surroundings, and mythology offered them the fantastic picture of a catastrophic end of the world. Their most famous religious teacher, Zoroaster, had championed this teaching, and apparently he had believed that the catastrophe was already imminent in

his day, in the seventh century B.C. But subsequent speculation preserved the sanctity of the hope by pushing it well forward into the future, in order that history might not deny its validity; and assurance was made doubly strong by asserting that this great expectation was no mere creation of human fancy, but a truth which had been divinely revealed.

V

Among the Greeks the experiences of life were so varied that the hope of a final triumph over present ills was expressed in several different ways. Fierce struggle was thought to have marked the course of the world's history from the very outset. At an early date stories were current describing the world's progress from the days of primeval chaos down to historical times, and all of these legends portray a constant conflict between hostile forces. From heaven and earth spring the Titans—gigantic personifications of the elemental forces of nature. Many a fierce battle has to be fought ere these elemental powers can be brought under the control necessary to an orderly status of civilized society. But at last Kronos, the mightiest of the Titans, is overthrown by his son Zeus, who

henceforth is revered as father of gods and men and ruler of the universe. Thus the primal forces of nature battle with one another until order emerges from chaos.

Greek mythology pictured the career of man in prehistoric times as one long conflict in which evil grew constantly stronger while man's condition became correspondingly less happy. In Hesiod's *Works and Days*, composed in the latter part of the eighth century B.C., these views find clear expression. The situation represented is a very human one. Hesiod and his brother Perses having agreed upon a division of their patrimony, Perses quickly spends his portion in fast living, while Hesiod retains the homestead and prospers by cultivating the soil. After dissipating his portion of the inheritance, Perses seeks to recruit his fortunes by means of litigation. He brings suit against his brother on the ground that the original distribution had not been just, and by bribing the judges he secures possession of the property. Hesiod appeals to his brother to forsake the law courts and submit to the righteous judgments of Zeus. Guided by this practical motive, the poet gathers up a number of popular tales to point the moral that industry and justice are the chief

virtues to be cherished in these degenerate times.

Hesiod is firmly convinced that the present world is full of evil. There is abroad in the land a spirit of strife which stirs up discord between brothers and engenders fearful wars. Both by day and by night unnumbered ills move silently and unseen among us mortals, striking down their victims at will. Because of their presence the earth is slow in yielding its increase, they prepare destructive insects or blighting scourges for the growing crops, they cause all manner of diseases which rack and consume the human frame, and they have brought upon men the curse of death. The situation seems all the more hopeless since it is a direct result of the effort made by Prometheus (Forethought), the would-be friend of man, to advance the status of mortals by teaching them the use of fire. But man must learn that his only hope—if he may hope at all—lies in absolute submission to the arbitrary will of the gods and not in any attainments to be reached by human effort. From this point of view the progress of human development is downward rather than upward.

The gradual deterioration of mankind is taught again in Hesiod's description of the suc-

cessive ages. At first the Olympian gods created a race of men free from all ills who lived many years without growing old, and who died at last as if merely overcome by sleep. During this Golden Age earth bore all good things spontaneously, and all men were rich both in material blessings and in divine favors. When this age was brought to a close by the will of Zeus, its men became kindly ministering spirits which veil themselves in shrouds of mist and move everywhere over the earth to direct or to succor mortals throughout all subsequent ages. Next comes the Silver Age, far inferior to the Age of Gold, but still a time of partial happiness. Ultimately the men of this time fall under the wrath of Zeus because they neglect the worship of the gods, but being a race of silver they receive a secondary position of honor beneath the earth and are known henceforth as "blessed ones." The third age is that of Bronze, when men learn war and give themselves over to terrible strife, but presently they are dragged down ingloriously to Hades. The Age of Iron—which Hesiod regards as the present age—is most wretched of all. Now there is no respite from toil, no release from care. This state of affairs will endure until the time

arrives for this age to end, for Zeus has also determined a day for the final destruction of the Age of Iron.

What will follow the Iron Age? Will the original cycle then repeat itself, bringing in the Age of Gold once more? Although the poet does not essay the rôle of prophet, yet he expresses a wish that his birth had been delayed until the cruel Age of Iron had passed. Apparently he dares to hope—perhaps even to believe—that the best is yet to be.

Greek mythology contains another legend that is instructive in the present connection. In the distant past man had been so strongly prone to wickedness that Zeus determined to devastate the earth with a flood. The destruction was complete, the righteous Deukalion and his wife alone escaping from the calamity. Instructed by an oracle, they cast behind them stones from which human beings spring; the earth itself produces plants and animals; and a new age arises when man is given a fresh opportunity to prove his mettle in the struggle against evil. Yet, on the whole, the course of development moves downward, notwithstanding temporary advances in civilization which are made possible by the assistance of heroes and

demigods. These helpers of mortals give aid in founding cities, teach men to cultivate the soil, communicate to them useful discoveries and inventions, inspire them to worthy attainments in poetry or song, and instruct them in the proper observances of religion. But even these accomplishments were not sufficient to persuade the Greek myth-maker that the present was not a degenerate age. He ceased not to look backward with longing eyes to the Golden Age of the past, or to entertain a faltering hope that those ideal days might return.

The past Golden Age was not the only model for future hopes; the mythical fate of heroes served a similar purpose. Such of these ancient worthies as had not been rewarded with a position among the gods were thought to be leading a delightful existence in the isles of the blest at the confines of the world. There they dwelt under the rule of Kronos, who had formerly held sway in heaven when the first Golden Age was upon earth. Now the blessed heroes enjoyed a partial return of primitive bliss, for three times yearly the fertile soil of the Elysian fields produced spontaneously its honey-sweet fruits. Toward these delightful regions present mortals often cast covetous eyes. Sometimes

a warrior weary of strife was tempted to forsake the conflict and to sail westward in search of this earthly paradise, which legend located on certain islands in the Atlantic Ocean a thousand miles or so from the African coast[1]. In Roman times Horace[2] makes bold to suggest that men take this Elysian kingdom of heaven by force. He bemoans the sad condition of mortals in the present Age of Iron and bids them forsake its wretchedness, turning their eyes toward those smiling isles of refuge where the earth yields her increase without the plowman's care. It is quite possible, however, that Horace is not advising his contemporaries to emigrate to the islands of the Atlantic, but is metaphorically referring to Rome itself, now under the rule of Augustus, who is hailed by his admirers as the restorer of the Golden Age. At this time some Romans really believed that their millennium had dawned.

VI

Greek mythology was freely appropriated by the Romans, who in some respects took the problem of the world's evil more seriously than did the Greeks. While Roman writers were

[1] Plutarch *Sertorius* 8 f. [2] *Epodes* 16.

busy expounding Greek myths for Latin readers, the Roman statesman, with his remarkable aptitude for practical efficiency, undertook the task of making the blessings of the Golden Age a reality for his own day and generation. Roman political philosophy of the first century B.C. adopted the notion of successive cycles in historical evolution and saw in contemporary events evidences of the passing of a decadent age and the dawn of a new order. The closing years of the Republic had been a period of much distress which made men peculiarly conscious of life's ills and prompted strong desires for deliverance. Poets called to memory the golden days of fabulous happiness when Saturn had ruled and wars were unknown, while at present under the dominion of Jupiter there was no end of war and slaughter.[1] Craze for war was said to rest like a curse upon Rome, doomed by fate thus to bring ultimate destruction upon herself.[2] As early as the year 88 B.C., in connection with the terrible civil war for which Sulla was held chiefly responsible, premonitory signs had been observed which were alleged to indicate the coming of a new age. It was reported that one day out of a clear sky a trumpet

[1] Tibullus i. 3. [2] Horace *Epodes* 7.

had sounded mournful and terrible, presaging the advent of internal conflicts which were to bring more distress upon Rome than she had formerly suffered from all her enemies.[1] Again, at Julius Caesar's funeral the alleged appearance of a wonderful star in broad daylight was taken to indicate the exit of one age and the dawn of a new era.[2]

During the period of reconstruction following the death of Julius Caesar and the gradual rise of Octavian to a position of supreme power throughout the whole Roman world, Virgil ventured to prophesy. He was not unmindful of the ills to which humanity was heir, nor did he ignore the trying experiences of the times; yet in spite of all these calamities he was distinctly optimistic. To be sure, he recognized that the husbandman often found his efforts thwarted by wild beasts, by robbers, or by floods, but in struggling against these enemies man acquired much greater skill than would otherwise have been possible. In fact, Jupiter himself had let loose these hostile forces for the very purpose of encouraging humanity toward higher attainments.[3] But in all his striving

[1] Plutarch *Sulla* 7.

[2] Servius on Virgil *Ecl.* ix. 46.

[3] *Georg.* i. 121 ff.

man remembered that once upon a time there had been no pests, the very choicest products of nature had grown spontaneously in great abundance, and now the former Age of Gold was about to return.

Virgil based his hope upon observation and revelation. The hope of world-renewal had been suggested both by legends regarding ideal times in the past and by the notion of cycles in the revolution of the ages. The troubles of the time provided a fitting occasion for the introduction of a new order, while desire and expectancy made it easier to perceive premonitory signs of coming events. In addition to these immediate incentives, the Sibylline books—the "bible" of Roman religion—had also revealed the approach of a new era. Under the inspiration of all these authorities Virgil uttered his famous prophecy of the impending Roman "millennium":

> The last age prophesied by the Sibyl is come and the great series of ages begins anew. Justice now returns, Saturn reigns once more, and a new progeny is sent down from high heaven. O chaste Lucina, be thou propitious to the infant boy under whom first the iron age shall cease and the golden age over all the world arise. Now thine own Apollo reigns. While thou too, Pollio, while thou art consul, this glory of our

age shall dawn and the great months begin to roll. Under thy rule all vestiges of our guilt shall disappear, releasing the earth from fear forever. He [the newborn child] shall partake of the life of the gods, he shall see heroes mingling with gods, and be seen by them, and he shall bring peace to the world, ruling it with his father's might. On thee, O child, the earth, as her first offerings, shall pour forth everywhere without culture creeping ivy with lady's glove, and Egyptian beans with smiling acanthus intermixed. The goats of themselves shall convey homeward their udders distended with milk, nor shall the herds dread monstrous lions. Thy very cradle shall blossom with attractive flowers. The serpent shall perish and the secret-poison plant shall disappear; the Assyrian balm shall grow in every field. But as soon as thou shalt be able to read the praises of heroes and the achievements of thy sire, and to know what virtue is, the field shall by degrees grow yellow with ripening corn, blushing grapes shall hang on the rude brambles, and hard oaks shall drip with dewy honey. . . . . Dear offspring of the gods, mighty seed of Jove, enter thy great heritage, for the time is now at hand. See how the world's massive dome bows before thee—earth and oceans and the vault of heaven. See how all things rejoice at the approach of this age. Oh, that my last stage of life may continue so long and so much breath be given me as shall suffice to sing thy deeds![1]

This politico-religious faith of the Romans was still further strengthened by the success of

[1] *Ecl.* iv.

Augustus in establishing order throughout the Empire. When Virgil had delivered his messianic prophecy in the year 40 B.C., he did not specifically name the divine child who was to prove himself savior of the world. But later, when composing the sixth book of the *Aeneid*, the poet was able to point to Augustus as the promised deliverer who is "to establish again the Golden Age in Latium, through those lands where Saturn reigned of old."[1]

Faith in the saving mission of Augustus is not the peculiar possession of the literary men of the imperial court; it is also a widespread belief among the populace, particularly in the eastern portion of the empire. In these regions it had been customary for centuries to regard a beneficent prince as a saving minister of Deity. In Greece, Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt powerful generals and other potentates had often been hailed as deliverers from ill, and the blessings which their rule conferred upon their subjects were esteemed as divine gifts. But at no period in the memory of man had the stability of life in the Mediterranean world been more secure than under the kindly rule of Augustus. These

[1] *Aeneid* vi. 788 ff.

new conditions, in contrast with the wretchedness of the preceding period, led naturally to most extravagant praise of the emperor. Surely his advent had brought an end to the Age of Iron, and now the process of world-renewal had begun. Accordingly Augustus' subjects inscribed memorials to him in which they expressed a belief that Providence had now fulfilled all the prayers of mankind, "for earth and sea have peace; cities flourish well governed, harmonious, and prosperous; the course of all good things has reached a climax, and all mankind has been filled with good hopes for the future and good cheer for the present."

The final revelation of divine favor for mortals had now been granted in the person and work of Augustus, whom Providence "filled with virtue for the benefit of mankind, sending him to be a savior for us as well as for our descendants, bringing all wars to an end, and setting up all things in order." By his coming he has not only fulfilled all past hopes and excelled all previous benefactors, but he has left to future generations no possibility of surpassing him. In short, when he was born the dawn of the Golden Age began. Such was the popular faith of many of Augustus' subjects.

VII

While mythological fancy and political theory were making their contributions toward the shaping of Graeco-Roman "millennial" hopes, the more distinctly religious and philosophical movements of the time were also exerting an influence upon the future hopes of the masses. Most important among the religions were the mystery-cults. The tendency of these cults was to turn men's minds away from the notion of world-salvation and to center attention upon the salvation of the individual. Yet the myths and rites of these religions reflected the idea of a mighty conflict in this world. Moreover, the conflict was thought to affect, not only the present welfare of man, but also the fate of his immortal soul. Each cult offered its devotees the hope of an ultimate victory over the world's hostile powers. The myths described how legendary divinities had warded off from mankind the terrors of winter, having procured, by means of their own descent to the lower world, power to revive the life of nature in the springtime and bless mortals with an abundance of summer fruits. In historical times these material blessings were used to symbolize a victory for the souls of deceased mortals. As the divine

hero of the cult had descended to the nether regions and returned triumphant, so the soul of his worshiper would be liberated from the shades below and transported to regions of eternal blessedness. Although belief in individual immortality offers escape from, rather than a solution of, the present world's ills, yet the picture of future blessedness described in the mysteries provided suggestive imagery for those who wished to portray the glories of a returning Golden Age upon earth.

The Graeco-Roman philosophers also struggled with the problem of the world's evil and proposed solutions for its removal. The ideal republic of Plato was to be a utopia of man's own making, but popular notions influenced very perceptibly the details of the scheme. This new model society was really a replica of the Golden Age of mythology with its more fanciful features omitted and the primary activities of the gods eliminated. But Plato's state was not to endure forever; it also was subject to the universal law of change and decay. First came the world-year during which humanity was upon the ascent, this development culminating in the realization of the ideal social order which Plato's imagination reared for itself.

Then another world-year sets in marked by a gradual process of decline. These two alternating ages will follow each other as long as the universe endures, each part of each cycle reappearing at its appointed time. Since the human body and the immortal soul are items in the process, man may ever rest assured that some day in the more or less distant future the Golden Age will return, when all souls and all bodies will be temporarily reunited under perfectly ideal conditions.

In the case of Epicureanism, its rigid materialism and its emphatic denial that the gods concerned themselves at all with the present world left room only for human activity in combating the ills to which flesh is heir. The Epicureans neither permitted themselves to follow mythological fancies nor did they indulge in idealistic flights of imagination, after the Platonic fashion. They scorned the popular belief that the history of mankind had been one long process of degeneration; on the contrary, they pictured it as a gradual rise in the arts of civilization. This process produced its pains and its pleasures, but the latter would predominate if man would only learn to live each day wisely and well, eliminating from his mind

all traditional religious errors. The greatest curse on mortals was their inherited fear of the gods and their dread of death, both notions being wholly erroneous according to Epicurean teaching. Since the soul did not survive the body, death was not to be feared, and since the gods had absolutely no part in the affairs of man, present evils belonged to the strictly human sphere. Under these circumstances conditions could be bettered only through the activity of better men in the present age, the primary instrument for betterment being the cultivation of correct philosophical thought.

The most influential school of philosophy in the early Roman Empire was that of the Stoics. Their ideas regarding the present world-struggle and its outcome are composite in character. Stoicism retained the traditional picture of an ideal past when mankind lived free from care and pleasing to God. Man's fall from this ideal state is ascribed to his own acts. At first he remained close to nature and was a tiller of the soil; he was an utter stranger to city life with its greed for gain and the consequent strife arising between men and nations. Ascent in so-called civilization had really meant decline in happiness and morals. When the first sword

was forged and the first ship built, man started upon that downward course which ultimately plunged him into wars, led him to undertake perilous journeys upon the sea, and engendered every form of jealousy, hatred, passion, and vice.

The only way of escape from the evils of modern decadent times was said to be a return to the simple life of nature. The Stoic preacher strenuously urged his contemporaries to apply this panacea for the healing of their own personal ills. They were personally responsible for the outcome of this effort, but the success of the struggle was partially guaranteed by the presence in their lives of a divine power—an inherent spark of Deity—which God had placed in every man's breast at birth. The hope of humanity lay in living true to the inward light. This ideal, if pursued, would result in the suppression of present evil, the purification of the world, and a life of ideal happiness.

If this program could have been carried out, man might have been able to inaugurate his own "millennium." But the Stoic did not really believe that this ideal was capable of full realization under present conditions. The goal was not to be reached by an evolutionary process slowly leading back to primitive ideal

conditions; on the contrary, it was to be attained by means of a cosmic catastrophe which would resolve the present world into its primal constituent elements, from which there would arise a new world where the Age of Gold would be restored.

Since Stoic teachers adopted the theory of cosmic cycles, their new world would not retain its perfection eternally. The same forces of deterioration that had wrought havoc in the past would again appear. Although everything had been newly created in innocence in order that no remnant might be left to tutor men in vice, yet the new race would soon decline. As Seneca dolefully remarks, vice quickly creeps in, while virtue is difficult to find; she needs a ruler and a guide, but vice can be acquired without a tutor.[1] Hence Stoic philosophy offered at best only a temporary release from evil—a release to be partially attained by the individual through his own efforts in living true to nature, and to be exhibited from time to time in the eternal cosmic process which periodically brought about world-dissolution and world-renewal.

This survey of gentile attempts to solve the problem both of the world's destiny and of

[1] *Natural Questions* iii. 30. 7.

man's relation to the ills of life shows how generally the ancients depreciate the significance of actual human effort. There is a prevalent tendency to trust almost exclusively in special supernatural intervention for the hope of deliverance from evil. Even when the hope seems on the point of realization under some beneficent ruler, he is given supernatural credentials as a means of guaranteeing his validity. Where direct supernatural aid is rejected, reliance is placed upon the arbitrary workings of a superior cosmic process, and thus again the significance of the human struggle is virtually denied.

CHAPTER II

HEBREW AND JEWISH HOPES

The Hebrew people were particularly sensitive to the presence of hostile forces in their world. The pressure of life's ills was felt by them even more keenly than by many of their gentile neighbors. They also believed that a final triumph for humanity would be secured only through the special intervention of Deity. In fact, rarely or never did any neighboring peoples hold so tenaciously as did the Jews to the hope of a glorious divine deliverance. Throughout a long period of years they suffered repeated misfortunes, but each new calamity seemed only to strengthen their confidence in the coming of a better day when their present unhappy condition would be completely reversed.

I

By the beginning of the Christian era Jewish hopes had passed through a long period of growth. The beginnings of this process are veiled in obscurity, but very possibly there had

been a time when the ancestors of the Jews, like most other peoples in that ancient world, had depicted their fears and hopes in the form of myths reflecting a dread of nature's elemental forces and a hope of victory to be secured by the help of Deity. In historical times the Hebrews were unique in their efforts to bring all supernatural activities under the control of their own national god, Jehovah. Consequently at an early date he assumed the all-embracing rôle of both destroyer and deliverer.

Jehovah is frequently associated with the terrors of thunder, lightning, and storm. When angry, he speaks in the roaring tempest or in the crashing thunder, and the flaming lightning is the breath of his nostrils. He is also the god of earthquake and volcanic fire. He causes the earth to tremble and shakes the mountains to their very foundations. At times his anger burns so furiously that he cleaves asunder the ground and melts the rocks by his presence. He vents his rage upon his enemies by pouring forth streams of burning brimstone which utterly consume everything in their path.

Pestilence, death, and calamities in general were thought to be the work of Jehovah. He dragged down to Sheol whom he would, and

preserved life according to his own good pleasure. He let loose pests upon the earth to destroy vegetation, and sent ferocious beasts or poisonous reptiles to afflict mankind. Drought, famine, and disease were his instruments for punishing those who had incurred his displeasure.

While unkind nature furnished picturesque imagery for portraying the action of Jehovah's wrath, the assumption of a unique bond of attachment between him and his chosen people must have constituted a substantial basis for the hope of ultimate escape from misery. And considering the relatively late date at which the Jews stressed the joys of a blessed life beyond the grave, the type of hope entertained even in very early times would probably involve some form of world-renewal and national redemption.

This form of hope is reflected in popular legends regarding the beginning of human history and Hebrew national life. The notion of the decadence of humanity so widely current among ancient peoples appears in the story of the creation and the fall. The picture of primitive man in his paradise of innocence is quickly followed by a description of disobedience resulting in his expulsion from Eden. Then follows a period of struggle in which human skill slowly

conquers its unfriendly environment, producing the instruments and arts of early civilization. But these attainments are not thought to mark any permanent progress. On the contrary, evil increases rapidly upon the earth until the human race becomes so degenerate as to incur destruction by a flood.

A new era of history is said to begin with Noah, through whose instrumentality Jehovah preserved the life of the world and showed himself the savior of humanity. But as Noah's descendants spread themselves over the earth the process of degeneration began anew and continued until relieved by another act of Jehovah. He did not again destroy the human race, but selected therefrom a favored individual, Abraham, who was to become the father of a peculiar people. Thus the call of Abraham as described in Hebrew legends marks the inauguration of another era in the history of human hopes.

The ultimate goal of human desire is still far in the future. Jehovah has disclosed his intention of carrying out a selective program of salvation, but the consummation of the new scheme requires time. A long struggle ensues, until finally the forces of evil become so masterful that they threaten the complete destruction

of Abraham's descendants who are now enslaved in the land of Egypt. Again their God must intervene to rescue his people and rebuild the shattered structure of their fallen hopes. Salvation is effected through a miraculous deliverance from Egyptian bondage and is confirmed by a new revelation of the divine will made to Moses on Sinai.

With the release from Egypt and the giving of the law, Hebrew faith saw the inauguration of another new era in the people's history, but a long period of waiting elapsed before they effected even preliminary possession of the promised land. And after they crossed its boundaries it seemed much less fair than when they had viewed it from afar, imagining that it flowed with milk and honey. The struggles of conquest and the dangers incident to contact with the older Canaanitish civilization which the Hebrews supplanted or absorbed made this period of their history also seem to fall far short of the ideal which had been foreshadowed in the revelation to Moses.

With the portrayal of David and Solomon another high-water mark is reached indicating a new era of divine favor. Once more Jehovah has intervened, anointing a king to rule over

his people and to bestow prosperity upon the nation. A permanent dwelling-place for the Deity is now provided in Jerusalem, and the national hopes seem on the verge of full realization. But evil days quickly follow. With Solomon's death his kingdom is disrupted with internal strife, and in succeeding years neighboring hostile nations harass both Israel and Judah until at last the people are utterly crushed by the foreign conqueror or carried away captive into Babylonia.

II

An interesting era in the history of Hebrew hopes begins with the activity of the pre-exilic prophets. These interpreters of the national life spoke chiefly of impending calamities. They often protested vehemently against the popular notion that Jehovah's selection of the Hebrews as a favored race eliminated the possibility of national disaster. On the contrary, they insisted that calamity was imminent, having been designed by Jehovah himself as an expression of displeasure with the very people of his special choice. More remarkable still, the prophets sometimes said that the heathen powers had been deliberately selected by Jehovah as

his instruments for the punishment of the Hebrews. From ancient times earthquake, storm, or pestilence had served to express the wrath of Deity, but now the menacing heathen nations were alleged to be his chosen instruments of chastisement.

As in the case of Hesiod,[1] it was a consciousness of social ills that prompted the earliest prophets to reflect upon the outcome of history. In his arraignment of the evils of his day, Amos is representative. He sees the poor oppressed by the rich, the judges sell their decisions, the morals of the people are corrupted, and religion has degenerated into mere ritualism. Amos is confident that his own violent revulsion of feeling toward this state of affairs is shared by God, who will surely punish his people for their sins. In impassioned language the prophet repeats the words of doom pronounced upon Israel, "Smite the capitals, that the thresholds may shake; and break them in pieces on the head of all of them; and I will slay the last of them with the sword: there shall not one of them flee away, and there shall not one of them escape."[2]

The prophets are not always specific in their description of the divine vengeance. Some-

[1] See above, p. 29. [2] Amos 9:1.

times they speak vaguely of a time when Jehovah will unleash predatory hordes from the remote north country to descend upon Palestine with terrible destruction, or else a mighty concourse of all heathen nations will move with terrific tumult against the Hebrew people. Apparently these terrors are themselves merely preliminary to a still greater catastrophe to occur with the coming of the "day of Jehovah." This is to be a terrible time of disaster and darkness from which men shall seek in vain to escape: "Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of Jehovah's wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy: for he will make an end, yea a terrible end, of all them that dwell in the land."[1]

Even as early as the time of Amos the Hebrews were awaiting the advent of the day of Jehovah. But as pictured in popular expectation this momentous day was to issue in a complete destruction of Israel's enemies and a unique display of Jehovah's favor for his chosen people. Against this current belief Amos raised an insistent protest. He declared that on the impending day of catastrophe sinful Israelites

[1] Zeph. 1:18.

would suffer equally with their heathen neighbors. To him it seemed sheer folly for the people to desire the speedy coming of the day of Jehovah. In their present state of wickedness it could mean disaster only. It would be as if a man when fleeing from a lion is met by a bear, or on going into the house for safety is bitten by a serpent hidden in the crevices of the wall. That day will be a moment of great disillusionment for those who sit at ease in Zion and think themselves secure in the mountain of Samaria.

Amos is so emphatic in his pronouncement of doom that hope scarcely looms upon his horizon. Is there really no silver lining to the storm cloud of disaster that lowers in his sky? He is familiar with the ancient legends depicting Jehovah's choice of the Hebrews and the favors bestowed upon them throughout the course of their history. But on this very account their sinful conduct seems particularly culpable. Because they have broken faith with Jehovah his anger burns even more furiously against them than against other peoples with whom he has established no unique covenant. Yet hope is not completely dead. Disaster may still be averted, though only at the cost of strenuous moral

reform. The preaching of Amos was designed to accomplish this reform, but he was sadly disappointed. The leaders of the people ridiculed him for his righteous zeal and scoffed at his predictions of disaster. Whatever hope he may have retained on behalf of the poor and oppressed, who surely were entitled to some form of divine vindication, the future of the nation as a whole seemed exceedingly precarious. The fragments of the children of Israel to be saved—if such an outcome can be called salvation—will be like a couple of legs or a piece of ear recovered by a shepherd after the lion has preyed upon his flock.

Hosea, a younger contemporary of Amos, was also moved by the social and religious ills of his day to predict impending disaster. When described in the rhetorical language of the prophet, conditions seem most deplorable: "There is no truth, nor goodness, nor knowledge of God in the land. There is nought but swearing and breaking faith, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery."[1] Falsehood, perjury, avarice, theft, robbery, murders, drunkenness, idolatry, and political intrigues are among the sins of which people, rulers, and priests are alike

[1] Hos. 4:1 f.

guilty. In enumerating the immoralities of his day Hosea does not follow Amos in stressing the injustice done to men, but emphasizes the sin against Jehovah involved in such conduct. The God who had loved the Hebrew nation in its infancy and delivered it from bondage in Egypt has now been forsaken by the people of his choice and therefore disaster is inevitable.

Hosea gives no detailed description of the coming catastrophe, but evidently he is looking for the advent of the day of Jehovah. Recent international events had made it possible for him to be somewhat more specific than Amos had been in his references to the political situation. Yet even Hosea is uncertain as to whether Assyria or Egypt will be the agent chosen by God to punish Israel. But punishment is sure and terrible: "Therefore am I unto them as a lion; as a leopard will I watch by the way; I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the caul of their heart; and there will I devour them like a lioness; the wild beast shall tear them."[1] Although the divine anger could be averted by repentance, Hosea feels as did Amos that the response to his message has been too feeble to warrant any

[1] 13:7 f.

bright outlook for the future of the nation. The capital city, Samaria, shall be laid waste in punishment for her rebellion against God. Her men shall be given to the sword, her infants shall be dashed in pieces to the ground, and her women shall be massacred.

The fears of Amos and Hosea had been aroused by conditions in the Northern Kingdom. A few years later similar conditions in Judea awakened new prophetic voices. In his revolt against the social and religious ills of his day, Micah bears a strong resemblance to Amos. He severely upbraids the rulers for their iniquitous conduct. They lay schemes to deprive men of lands and houses, women are robbed of their inheritance, and children are sold into slavery. In the picturesque language of the prophet the rulers are said to "eat the flesh of my people, and flay their skins from off them, and break their bones, and chop them in pieces, as for the pot, and as flesh within the caldron."[1] Even religious leaders join in the pursuit of wealth and in the oppression of the poor.

To Micah's sensitive soul these enormities seem to demand a mighty outburst of divine wrath upon Judah. Self-satisfied individuals

[1] 3:3.

were affirming that no evil could befall them. Since they were Jehovah's chosen people, he was in their midst and insured their safety. Micah meets this smug confidence with a bold declaration of impending disaster. Not only will Samaria be razed to her very foundations, but, because the religious leaders have proved false to their trust, even Jerusalem, where the holy temple stands, shall be made desolate, and Zion shall be plowed as a field. It is quite probable that Micah regarded the threatening Assyrian armies as Jehovah's destined instrument of destruction.

Of future hope Micah has nothing to say. When Jehovah's anger has spent itself on sinners in Judah, will the innocent have perished along with the guilty? It seems as necessary for Micah as for Amos to expect some form of divine vindication for those who had been unjustly oppressed. Nor is it easy to imagine that a prophet could have abandoned completely his fathers' time-honored faith in Jehovah's care for his chosen people. It might become necessary to purge them in the refining furnace of terrible affliction, but the thought of utter annihilation is hardly conceivable. Bad government, a corrupt social order, and degrad-

ing religious practices might be wiped out, along with all persons responsible for this unhappy condition of things, but it would be quite another matter to cut off completely every child of the covenants which had been made with Abraham and Moses.

Isaiah seems to have taken a keener interest in politics than did his contemporary, Micah. Yet in the case of Isaiah also the fundamental incentive for prophetic activity was a feeling of sharp revolt against current social and moral ills. When Jehovah looks for justice he finds only oppression. The rich landowners enlarge their estates by crowding out the small farmers. Surrounded by luxury, the wealthy revel from early morning until late at night. The chosen Hebrew people, nourished and reared by Jehovah, no longer yield allegiance to him, but have given themselves over to iniquity. They have despised the holy one of Israel, they have become estranged and degenerate. Judges, rulers, priests, and professional prophets are equally guilty. The elders and princes have devoured the vineyard and crushed the needy; it is impossible for poor men, widows, or orphans to obtain just decisions in the law courts; and in vain do priests multiply sacrifices and prophets

utter smooth words while the masses remain uninstructed in the ways of true righteousness.

Isaiah is confident that his own hatred for the wicked deeds of the people is but an echo of the divine displeasure. To the self-satisfied leaders who call for the speedy advent of the day of Jehovah, the prophet announces impending doom. In that day the proud and haughty shall be humbled, while God alone shall be exalted. Terrified by his glory, men shall flee from his presence, seeking refuge in the clefts of the rocks and the caves of the earth. Drastic punishment is to fall both upon Israel and upon Judah. From Israel Jehovah will cut off "head and tail, palm branch and rush in one day"; the people will be consumed as fuel in the furnace and the land itself shall be burned up. Or, changing the figure, the Lord will swoop down upon drunken Ephraim like a destructive hailstorm with a mighty flood of waters, leveling everything in its pathway. A like fate awaits the sinners of Judah, upon whom Jehovah will pour out the purging fires of his wrath, for "Jerusalem is ruined and Judah is fallen" as a result of their words and deeds against their God.

In the political disturbances of his environment Isaiah detected the avenging hand of God. The coalition of Syria and Israel against Judah in 735, the triumph of the Assyrians over the Northern Kingdom in 721, Judah's fear of Egypt on the one hand and of Assyria on the other, and particularly the invasion of Judea by Sennacherib in 701, were impressive items in Isaiah's experience. At one time he declares that the Syrians in front and the Philistines in the rear shall devour Israel with open mouth; and again he thinks that both capitals, Damascus and Samaria, shall be despoiled by the Assyrians. Nor is Judah to escape unscathed. Jehovah will send the Assyrian against Judah and her idols as well as against Samaria. The foreign conquerors shall be empowered to take vengeance upon the profane nation, spoiling its treasures and treading down its citizens like mire in the streets. Again, the prophet speaking for Jehovah declares that God will summon distant nations to act as his instruments for punishment. Immediately they will respond with arrows ready upon the string. The hoofs of the horses shall be as flint, and the chariots shall move with the speed of the whirlwind. The noise will be as the roar of the lion or the

resounding of the deep, and there will be no escape from the terrors of that destructive onslaught.

Does the consuming zeal of the prophet's denunciation leave any room for hope? Since he pleads with his hearers to forsake their evil ways and to walk in the paths of righteousness, certainly the possibility of salvation must be assumed. But in a more pessimistic mood, when stung by disappointment at the seeming failure of his mission, Isaiah affirms that God has designedly dulled the understanding and blinded the eyes of the people lest they should repent and be saved. There is no escape for the nation in its present state of social, political, and religious decay. Yet the prophet has a band of faithful disciples who perpetuate his teaching and confidently wait for Jehovah to act.[1] Are not they, and others who have been innocently oppressed by wicked rulers, to escape the national wreck? It is difficult to imagine that Isaiah could have thought otherwise. Indeed, in the midst of his vivid description of the terrible doom to overtake sinners in Jerusalem, he incidentally refers to the safety of those who trust in Jehovah and the sure foundation stone

[1] 8:16–18.

laid by him in Zion. When the politicians seek to insure the future of the nation by means of alliances with Assyria or Egypt, Isaiah counsels trust in Jehovah as the only source of safety. Failure to heed this advice must result in utter destruction of the corrupt political and social régime, but surely the select few who remain loyal to God will be delivered. When the fiery trial is passed, a new order of just judges and counselors like to those of former days will be established and Zion shall be called "the city of righteousness."[1]

Zephaniah and Jeremiah followed in the footsteps of Isaiah. Zephaniah directed his polemic especially against the foreign religious practices current among the Hebrews. Jerusalem is termed a rebellious and polluted city, no longer trusting in Jehovah. Her princes and judges devour on every hand, her professional prophets make light of their calling, and her priests profane the sanctuary. Therefore Jehovah will wreak awful vengeance upon the disobedient people.

Jeremiah is similarly emphatic in his denunciation of contemporary evils. He affirms that rulers and princes are guilty of gross sins,

[1] 1:24–26.

falsehood and deceit are rife among priests and prophets, worship of strange gods fills the land, and a desire for political alliances with Egypt or with Assyria shows lack of faith in Jehovah. In opposition to the current belief that all is well because the Hebrews are divinely chosen, Jeremiah asserts not only that their immoralities have canceled the alleged unique obligations of God to them, but that he has actually determined upon their destruction. Before his fierce anger all the fields shall be laid waste and all the cities shall perish.

The new element of terror projected into that ancient world by the activities of Scythian hordes seems to have intensified the sense of impending disaster both for Zephaniah and for Jeremiah. The latter also lived to see Babylonian pressure upon Judea grow so intense that the downfall of the nation became inevitable. Under these circumstances it was not strange that he should be the gloomiest of all the gloomy prophets. Apparently he did not anticipate a favorable hearing for his message, nor is he reserved in his sweeping pronouncements of doom upon the nation. Yet he certainly entertains a firm future hope, especially for the earlier exiles who had been carried off to Baby-

lonia in 597 B.C. Their deliverance is yet a long way off, and in the meantime drastic punishment will be meted out to the remnant of the nation left in Judea. But ultimately Jehovah will assemble his faithful captive people from among the nations and restore them to their inheritance.[1]

In their attitude toward contemporary culture there is a striking similarity, notwithstanding fundamental differences, between the ancient Hebrew prophets and the later Stoics. The Stoic deplored the suffering brought upon mankind by commercial and political activities. The present order of society seemed to him to be a sad deterioration from conditions of an earlier time when men had lived close to nature. And the only hope of deliverance from present degenerate ways lay in an approaching cosmic catastrophe. Similarly the ancient prophets condemned the new structure of society which had grown up among the Hebrews after their migration from the desert into the more artificial environment of Canaan. In their new surroundings the people learned commercial greed, they instituted rivalry between rich and poor, religious ceremonies became more

[1] 24:1–10; 25:8–14; 29:1–32.

elaborate and more formal, the administration of justice was less certain, political schemes infected both domestic and foreign relationships—in short, the unsophisticated life of the nomad was gradually giving way to a new social order which invited the exercise of human initiative in many new fields.

Every fresh experiment in cultural development necessarily liberates both good and evil forces. New skill, new wealth, new knowledge, and new power are equally capable of use or of abuse, and the latter often seems to run far in advance of the former. So it seemed to the ancient Hebrew prophets before whose eyes the evils of their day loomed so large that all possibilities of good in the new national experience were almost completely obscured. Help was not sought in any gradual process of reform designed to offset new evils by means of new forces of righteousness. To be sure, the prophets were most vigorous in demanding individual moral reform, but their program was essentially a return to the standards of earlier days. When they found themselves unable to turn the stream of the national life back upon its course, they looked for relief through a mighty act of divine intervention. Jehovah

would completely destroy the new degenerate civilization and restore the old ideal order.

As viewed by the prophet, his chief duty was to upbraid sinners and announce impending doom. Consequently his hopes for the future of the people are usually implied rather than clearly expressed. Apparently no remnant of the national life as organized at present is to survive. Hosea sees no hope of salvation in kings or princes whom God gave to Israel in his wrath and takes away in his fury, and Isaiah looks forward to the restoration of a former condition when judges and counselors administer the government in primitive simplicity. Jehovah had not abandoned his people even though he might be compelled in the near future to annihilate the present social order. Regarding the details of the new order as they lay in the imagination of the prophet, we know little or nothing, but doubtless current myth and legend furnished ample imagery for constructing a very realistic and attractive picture of a new theocratic community.

III

The downfall of the kingdom of Judah in 586 B.C. marked a distinct turning-point in the

history of Hebrew hopes. Notwithstanding the severity of the national catastrophe, hope still survived. Neither removal from Palestine nor the trying experiences of subsequent years could shatter the confidence of the Jews in the ultimate triumph of their God. But the experiences of the post-exilic period did necessitate important changes both in the form and in the content of their hope. In comparison with the vaguer notions of earlier times, Jewish thinking now constructed a more varied, elaborate, and doctrinaire program of final redemption and world-renewal.

Apparently the earlier prophets had expected that the culmination of national disaster would either coincide with, or immediately precede, the coming of the day of Jehovah. But, as events turned out, the victory of the foreign conqueror was not attended by any unusual cosmic display. The day of Jehovah still remained to be revealed in the future. The opinion of Amos and his successors, who had pictured this day as the hour of Israel's doom, was now superseded by the older and more popular belief that it would be the moment of Israel's vindication. Jehovah was still a God of terror, and the present world was doomed to

disaster, but surely the chosen people had already suffered their share of calamity. They were more confident than ever before that the end would bring affliction for Gentiles but exaltation for Jews. Preparation for this anticipated event and speculation regarding the details of the program now engaged the attention of various leaders.

Even with the downfall of the nation the destructive work of Jehovah is not finished, nor will it be at an end until the final day of judgment has passed. But on the judgment day he will vent his rage mainly upon the Gentiles. Sometimes their complete annihilation was anticipated, while at other times destruction was planned only for the actual enemies of Jehovah's people. As would be expected, the doom of Babylon was portrayed in lurid colors. When provision was made for the escape of certain Gentiles on the day of final disaster, it was assumed that thereafter they would be servants of the Jews and worshipers of Jehovah. In still other circles more stress was placed upon the conversion of the heathen, not merely by miraculous intervention of God, but by the missionary efforts of the Jewish people in the days preceding the

judgment. But ultimately Israel's triumph would be supreme over all the earth.

It was assumed that the Jews also must suffer further agony while waiting for the fulfilment of their hopes. A final outburst of hostility on the part of their heathen enemies was to be expected. In addition to their old foes from Egypt and Babylonia, new attacking armies led by the mythical Gog were to appear in the last days. Nature, too, would become more hostile and refuse to yield her accustomed fruits. Jehovah's fire would burn up fields and forests, leaving both men and beasts without shelter and without food. Frightful natural phenomena would add to the agony as the sun grew dark and the moon turned red like blood.

The execution of judgment was to be a terror to Jews as well as to Gentiles. Post-exilic teachers agreed with the early prophets in maintaining that mere ancestry would not deliver the sinful Israelites. Jehovah would provide ample opportunity for repentance, even sending Elijah back to earth to admonish the people, but unrepentant Jews as well as Gentiles would perish in the day of judgment. That great assize will mean a final sifting even for Israel, when the wicked will be burned as stubble,

while upon the faithful the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its beams.

The restoration of the captives to Palestine was the outstanding item in the hope of post-exilic Judaism. This was to be a glorious triumph accomplished by the direct intervention of Jehovah, who would summon his children from the north, from the south, from the east, and from the west, bringing them back to the land of their ancestors.[1] When hope grows dim with weary years of waiting, a new prophet comes forward with a message of comfort and assurance, declaring again that the time is at hand when the glory of Jerusalem is about to be restored. Jehovah will lead the exiles back from captivity through the wilderness by a marvelous highway miraculously prepared. Every valley shall be filled up, every mountain and hill shall be thrown down, and all rough places shall be converted into a smooth plain for the passage of the returning exiles back to Zion, where "everlasting joy shall be upon their heads."[2] As the earlier prophets had longed for the restoration of ideal nomadic conditions, so the prophets of the exile turned wistfully toward their more immediate past and proclaimed the

[1] Ezek. 36:24–28. [2] Isa. 35:8–10; 40:1–11.

coming of the day when the idealized national life of Palestine would be restored.

In depicting the anticipated glory of the restored nation, pious imagination rose to dizzy heights. The new age was to witness a miraculous transformation of the land of Palestine. The hill of Zion, capped by a magnificent new temple, would rise conspicuously above the surrounding country. All hills and ravines would be converted into one vast plain, sloping away in every direction from the Holy City. From Jerusalem there would flow forth streams of living water both eastward and westward throughout summer and winter. All waste places were to be made fruitful, and the whole land would yield spontaneously an abundance of all good things. The very mountains would drip with sweet wine, unlimited supplies of butter and honey would be found in every man's larder, both priests and people would be sated with fatness.

Jerusalem was to be rebuilt in great magnificence. The devastated city would rise so gloriously from its ashes that no vestige of former humiliation would remain. The decorations of the city were to be provided by Jehovah himself: "I will set thy stones in fair colors, and

lay thy foundations in sapphires, and I will make thy pinnacles of rubies, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy border of precious stones."[1] Sun and moon would no longer serve the city for light, since these natural luminaries would be outshone by the radiance of Jehovah dwelling in the midst of his people. Under these new conditions Jerusalem would enjoy fabulous prosperity as commerce and trade from all parts of the earth streamed through its gates.

A wonderful transformation of humanity is also anticipated. Jehovah will sprinkle clean water upon his people, and thus purge them of all evil. Everyone not cleansed shall be destroyed, and nothing unholy will come into the midst of the renewed community. The stony heart is to be replaced by a heart of flesh, upon which Jehovah will write his law in indelible characters. Henceforth religious instruction will be unnecessary, for instinctively every man from the least unto the greatest will have perfect knowledge of God. A new divine spirit will also take possession of mankind. This divine gift will be shared by all the people: "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men

[1] Isa. 54:11 f.

shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit."[1]

Even the wild beasts will be included in the process of renewal. All ferocious animals and poisonous reptiles will be either driven away or rendered harmless by a miraculous transformation. It will become perfectly safe for a man to tarry in the wilderness or to lie down to sleep in the forest. The wolf will no longer devour the lamb nor the leopard the kid, the calf will sport fearlessly with the young of the lion, and the little child will be safe in their presence. The cow and the bear will feed peaceably together, and the lion will be as harmless as the ox. Thus does knowledge of Jehovah transform even the most ferocious of the wild beasts.

Society will also be completely transformed. Injustice, oppression, hunger, poverty, sickness, and all other ills which ordinarily afflict mortals will find no place in the new social order. Under these ideal conditions sorrow will flee away, dispelled by perpetual rejoicing in the blessings of the new age. Life will be so greatly prolonged that he who dies when only one

[1] Joel 2:28 f.

hundred years of age shall be accounted as a youth snatched away by an untimely fate. No man will be put out of his possession or robbed of his reward, but everyone shall be privileged to enjoy in full the fruits of his own labor. All men's needs will be anticipated by Jehovah; before they call he will answer, and while they are yet speaking he will hear.

Even politics will undergo a complete transformation. All civic and international affairs will be placed upon an absolutely ideal basis. The whole world will be ruled from Palestine with Jerusalem as its capital. All hostile heathen nations will be annihilated or subdued, and such Gentiles as are permitted to survive will yield unhesitating obedience to the new Jewish régime. The new government will be administered by a vicegerent whom Jehovah will select and especially anoint for this task. This "Anointed One," or "Messiah," to use the Hebrew word, will be a member of the royal Davidic line. Since remarkable longevity is to characterize the new order of existence, the first messianic appointee will undoubtedly hold office for many years. Yet he is not necessarily eternal.[1] But the new type of government is to

[1] Ezek. 45:8; 46:16.

be permanent, because established by Jehovah himself, and it will remain the same throughout eternity whether administered by a single prince or by a legitimate succession of anointed rulers belonging to the Davidic house.

The new theocratic régime is to be one of perfect peace and righteousness. Swords will be converted into plowshares, and spears into pruning-hooks, and wars will forever cease. The regal glory of Jehovah will be exhibited in surpassing splendor, but his messianic vicegerent will be less ostentatiously equipped. Justice and salvation, coupled with humility, will be his distinctive insignia as he appears at the head of the royal procession riding upon an ordinary beast of burden. Jehovah will establish him in power over all the earth. Henceforth the restored throne of David will never lack an occupant who will rule justly and wisely, guided by the unerring divine spirit with which he has been abundantly endowed.

It was an awe-inspiring faith that dared to paint so gorgeous a picture of the restored kingdom of Palestine to which the waiting exiles hoped to return. The grandeur of their hope is all the more conspicuous just because it soared so far above all possibility of realization.

After half a century the conquest of Babylonia by the Persians made possible the return of a few Jews, and this event stimulated new national aspirations. But the return did not bring the hoped-for day of Jehovah when the Jews' enemies were to be destroyed and the land and people miraculously transformed.

The rehabilitation of the shattered nation was found to be a much more difficult task and more truly dependent upon human endeavor than the first idealists had imagined. Yet hope was not abandoned, although readjustments had to be made to meet new conditions. Since Jehovah had disappointed his people, his failure to act was taken as evidence of further displeasure. Hence an effort was made to establish Jewish life upon a new plane of holiness consonant with supposed divine requirements. The earlier prophets had stressed right moral action, to which post-exilic leaders added the demand for careful ritualistic observances. Since Jehovah had not restored the temple by his own act, the people inferred that its rebuilding by them might bring the desired consummation of their hopes. At one time the efforts of their local prince Zerubbabel to complete the temple were thought to presage the advent of the new age

when he would be installed in the messianic office, restoring the royal house of David.[1] But even in this reduced form the early messianic hope was not realized. Jehovah did not intervene to destroy the enemies of his people and to make the Jewish nation supreme.

IV

Events in Palestine during the early part of the second century B.C. gave a new turn to Jewish hopes. The Persian domination of Western Asia had been supplanted by Greek supremacy under Alexander and his successors. Palestine now belonged to the territory of the Seleucids, who were descended from one of Alexander's generals. In 168 B.C. the Seleucid ruler, Antiochus IV, surnamed Epiphanes, determined to break down the narrow spirit of nationalism fostered among the Jews, and to make them more truly an integral part of his kingdom. As a means to this end he made it a penal offense to perpetuate Jewish religious rites. Heathen observances were introduced throughout the land, an altar to Zeus was erected in the temple inclosure, and there a sow was sacrificed on December 25, 168 B.C., thus

[1] Hag. 2: 20–23.

desecrating the one spot on earth most sacred to every true Jew.

The Book of Daniel was written to interpret these new experiences and to cheer the faithful in their dark hour of distress. The author employs a comparatively new method for accomplishing his purpose, thereby contributing some significant new items to the formal development of Jewish hopes.

The literary method of the author of Daniel is that of the so-called apocalyptic writers who present their convictions and teachings in the form of visions or revelations. These disclosures may be made in the author's own name or in the name of some ancient worthy to whom God is supposed to have revealed long ago the ultimate outcome of world-history. The writer of Daniel adopts the latter of these two literary forms, and presents his message in terms of the trying experiences and triumphant faith of the Babylonian exiles of earlier days. But his contemporaries suffering under the cruel oppressions of Antiochus would have no difficulty in discovering that the author's words reflected their own trying situation.

The writer of Daniel offers a bold solution for the ills of his day. First he encourages his

readers to remain loyal to the sacred traditions for which they are being persecuted, remembering that Jehovah's reward is sure. Then in a series of four visions the seer is divinely instructed regarding the whole course of history and its ultimate outcome. In his first vision he sees four great beasts typical of four great world-powers. The first beast, like a lion with vulture's wings, represents the Babylonian Empire. The second beast is a bear, identified by the author with the kingdom of the Medes. Then comes a third beast, resembling a leopard and typifying the Persian rule. The fourth beast, Alexander and his successors, cannot be identified with any known earthly animal. It is a terrible creature with teeth of iron and claws of brass. It has ten horns, and as the seer looks upon it an eleventh horn, more terrible than the others, quickly springs up. This eleventh horn, with its human eyes and mouth and boastful speech, represents the persecutor Antiochus, whom the author reckons as the eleventh king of the Seleucid line.

Presently Daniel is favored with another vision depicting the final judgment. God appears in the likeness of an aged man clothed in white, riding upon a chariot of fire, and sur-

rounded by a host of angels. These events happen while the eleventh horn is still carrying on his depredations against Jehovah's people. But the divine punishment is speedy. The fourth beast, that is, the Greek dynasty to which Antiochus belongs, is slain and devoured by fire, an especially severe punishment being meted out to the eleventh horn. After this judgment has passed, a new figure appears upon the scene, a being in the likeness of mankind who is wafted upon the clouds into the presence of God. This "one like a son of man" typifies the new kingdom of the Jewish people to whom Jehovah now gives universal dominion. The particulars of this vision are explained to Daniel by an angel, who intimates that the day of final judgment is near at hand. Just three and a half years from the time that Antiochus desecrated the temple in 168 B.C. the end of the present world is to come and the new ideal order is to be established.

Daniel's third vision merely repeats in different imagery his previous message. He sees a ram with two horns, one representing the empire of the Medes and the other that of the Persians. Then suddenly from the west there arises a goat with one horn, and it makes a

furious onslaught upon the ram. The goat represents the Greeks, and Alexander is its great horn; but suddenly it is broken off and four others take its place. These represent the four divisions into which Alexander's kingdom was parted by his successors. From one of these horns comes a little horn, Antiochus IV, that grows rapidly toward the south and west, making war upon the Jews in an effort to overthrow the religion of the true God. The angelic interpreter explains that God will presently smite this scourge of the chosen people, and their polluted sanctuary shall be cleansed.

The fourth and last vision furnishes still another epitome of history under the guise of revelation. The Persian and the Greek kingdoms are described in turn, particular emphasis being placed upon the events leading up to Antiochus IV and his persecution of the Jews. This ruler shall exalt himself in his pride, even speaking against God, but his end is near. While he is on his way from a victorious expedition against the Egyptians, Jehovah will suddenly smite him within sight of Jerusalem. Following the death of Antiochus the people of God will have to endure a brief period of terrible suffering as the powers of evil make their

supreme effort at self-assertion. But Israel's guardian angel Michael will champion the afflicted people, effecting deliverance for the righteous, after which the dead will be raised to receive fitting rewards and punishments in the new age. Daniel heard the angel Gabriel solemnly declare that the period of great distress under Antiochus IV would last for three and one-half years, after which God would intervene to reward the faithful and establish a new régime upon earth.

As compared with the views of the post-exilic prophets, the Jewish hope depicted in Daniel shows much less interest in the restoration of the idealized kingdom of pre-exilic times. The Davidic Messiah is never mentioned. The only "Anointed One" referred to in the book is either the Persian king Cyrus or a Jewish priest whose career is to come to an end before redemption is fully accomplished.[1] The agent employed by Jehovah in establishing the new order is an angel from heaven, who is wholly devoid of previous earthly connections. There is really no Messiah at all in Daniel, but only God and the angels working together to bring about the redemption of the afflicted people. And when

[1] 9:24 f.

the task has been completed and the new age established, it will be not so much a restoration of the ancient regal glory of Israel as the institution of a new heavenly régime upon earth.

The hopes of the writer of Daniel, like those of his prophetic predecessors, failed of fulfilment. Antiochus IV did not die in the sight of Jerusalem as Daniel had predicted, nor did three and a half years bring an end to the troubles of the Jews. On the other hand, the Maccabean princes after a long struggle gained a measure of independence for the nation, but, with foreign oppression removed, new troubles arose within the national life, resulting at times in bloody civil warfare. When Rome appeared upon the scene, taking over Palestine in 63 B.C., the national independence of the Jews came to an end. Under the Herods, who ruled as vicegerents of Rome, conditions were tolerable at times, but unrest and discontent never ceased. In the year 70 A.D. the climax of woe seemed to be reached, when the Roman conqueror destroyed the temple, and the rebellion of Barcochba in the next century brought only new distress upon the much-afflicted people. Yet during all these years of repeated calamity their hopes survived, kept alive by the visions of

various apocalyptic writers who followed in the footsteps of Daniel.

A collection of apocalyptic writings pseudonymously connected with Enoch constitutes another important repository of Jewish hopes during a part of the second, and throughout the first, century B.C. These visions of the future, issued at different times and finally compiled into a single book, represent the efforts of various seers to stimulate the faith of the Jewish people. Enoch's eyes are said to have been opened by God, to whom he was introduced by the angels, who instructed him regarding events to come.

The first assurance offered by the book is a picture of the eternal God coming forth from his heavenly dwelling to tread upon the earth. He will execute judgment upon sinners, but the righteous shall inherit rich blessings. Having been purified from all evil, they will enjoy eternal gladness and peace all the days of their life.[1] Then follows a more detailed picture of this earthly blessedness of the new age. After God has removed all evil from the face of the earth, the renovated land is to become marvelously fruitful and the righteous are to

[1] Chaps. 1–5.

multiply abundantly. Upon this renewed earth rich blessings from heaven will descend; "truth and peace shall be associated together throughout all the days of the world and throughout all the generations of men."[1] Jerusalem will be the center of this new régime with God himself as ruler. The righteous dead will be raised to participate in the delights of the coming age, one of their privileges being the pleasure of witnessing the sufferings of apostate Jews in Gehenna.

A somewhat different description of the future is presented in another section of the book (chapters 83–90). The destiny of the world is revealed to Enoch in two dreams covering all past history, as well as the days to come. Enoch discovers that God had intrusted the welfare of Israel to seventy angels who began their activity at about the time of the exile. They represent hostile rulers whose task was the chastisement of Israel, but they performed their work with greater zeal than God had intended. These angelic masters were divided into four groups, one group officiating during the exile, another during the Persian rule, a third during the Greek rule down to a time when certain Jewish reforms were championed by a great

[1] 11:2.

leader of the now obscure party to which the author himself belongs. This leader is a warrior prince, perhaps one of the Maccabean line, whose career falls under the régime of the fourth group of angels and is to be followed by the introduction of the day of Jehovah. The exact date of this event is not specified, but manifestly the author regards it as imminent.

The near future holds in store a brilliant victory for God, who himself descends to execute judgment upon sinners. Prominent among those to be punished are the seventy angels representing the foreign powers which had afflicted Israel. They are to be cast into a fiery abyss, while apostate Jews suffer similar torture in the valley of Gehenna near Jerusalem. The old Jerusalem is to be folded up like a discarded tent, its place being taken by a new heavenly Jerusalem where God himself will dwell. All Gentiles in the surrounding country are to become subject to Israel, and the righteous are to be raised to join the new community. As the climactic event on the program, the Messiah will be born and assume a position of leadership in the new society.

Still other portions of this composite book furnish interesting variations in imagery. One

seer has a vision of the whole course of history divided into ten world-weeks (chapters 91–104). The end of the first seven successive weeks is marked respectively by Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Solomon's temple, the exile, and the end of the righteous party of Jews to whom the writer belongs. The eighth week, soon to come, will usher in a new age of triumph for the faithful, when they will be given power to slay the wicked. The ninth and tenth weeks are a messianic period of happiness when the righteous dwell in the new Jerusalem which has been set up upon earth. During this time the world at large learns of impending judgment. On the last day of the tenth week the great final judgment takes place, after which there will be a new heaven and "many weeks without number forever and all shall be in goodness and righteousness and sin shall no more be mentioned forever."

One more picture from the collection of Enoch apocalypses especially merits notice. This is contained in a series of three parables which the Lord of spirits teaches Enoch in order that he may recount them to those that dwell upon the earth (chapters 37–71). Transported to heaven, he sees the future abodes of the

righteous now occupied by angels and by the pre-existent heavenly Messiah. Then follows a description of this Messiah, who is presently to come in judgment to take vengeance upon hostile earthly rulers. Enoch sees the picture of this impending event which is to strike terror into both men and angels. The heathen will make a terrific assault upon Jerusalem, but their efforts will result in self-destruction. The really triumphant host now appears in the form of the returning Israelites who come riding upon the winds to Jerusalem, where they fall down and worship the Lord of spirits.

The final parable describes the consummation of the new kingdom, when the "Son of Man," the pre-existent heavenly Messiah, is finally revealed. Judgment is set up by the Messiah, who now occupies the very throne of God. Angels as well as men are subject to the judgment, and condemnation is passed upon all sinners. The earth, purged of all evil, will become the fit and eternal dwelling-place of the Messiah and his companions, who revel in the glories of an incorruptible heavenly world now established upon the renovated earth.

During the first century A.D., as a means of offsetting contemporary evils, the apocalyptic

type of hope continued to thrive among the Jews. At some time in the first part of this century another apocalypse, the Secrets of Enoch, was issued in the name of Enoch, describing what he saw as he was journeying up through the seven heavens until he arrived in the very presence of God. After residing in the highest heaven for a month he returned to earth for a similar period in order to encourage holy living among men, lest they miss the mansions prepared for the righteous and fall into the torments awaiting the wicked. This future hope is mainly an affair of the individual, but in one passage the author intimates that the end of the present world is to be expected seven thousand years from the date of creation.[1] This date is obtained by making each day of creation-week represent one thousand years. Since God created the world in six days, it will endure under present conditions six thousand years; then will come a thousand years of peace —the millennium—corresponding to God's Sabbath day of rest. This last world-day will be followed by the judgment, when the present world will cease, the righteous being transported to mansions in heaven, while the wicked find

[1] 32:1 f.

their place in hell, itself located in the third heaven.

A different reckoning is proposed by another apocalypse commonly known as the Assumption of Moses. It sketches the history of the Hebrews from the time of Moses to the advent of the expected messianic age. The end is to come seventeen hundred and fifty years after Moses' death, which is said to have occurred twenty-five hundred (or twenty-seven hundred) years after the creation. The author lived early in the first century A.D. and apparently believed the new day to be near at hand when he wrote. The present rulers are denounced, but their career is to be short-lived. The writer portrays in usual fashion the terrible woes immediately to precede the end, when God himself will punish the enemies of Israel. Yet it is not at all certain that the seer expects the establishment of any messianic age upon earth. After God intervenes Israel shall be exalted and the days of her sorrow ended. But seemingly her reward is simply translation to heaven: "God shall exalt thee and bring thee to the heaven of the stars, the place of his habitation."[1]

[1] 10:9 f.

The two most elaborate apocalypses of the first or early second century A.D. received their final form soon after the fall of Jerusalem in the year 70, and were designed especially to strengthen hopes which had been severely shaken by that dire calamity. One of these works was issued in the name of Baruch, the scribe of Jeremiah.[1] God is represented as announcing to Baruch the destruction about to overtake Jerusalem, but the scribe's grief is relieved by a divine assurance that in due time the triumphant glory of God will be fully revealed. Baruch himself is to live to see the day of God's victory. True, the holy city has fallen apparently at the hands of the Gentiles, but in reality by the act of four angels sent from God, who thus punishes his people in order that they may be more thoroughly sanctified. Particulars regarding the great tribulation are disclosed, but those persons who keep the law faithfully will survive all these terrible trials. As Rome has destroyed Jerusalem, so this heathen nation shall itself perish at the hands of the heavenly Messiah soon to be revealed, who will establish temporarily his triumphant rule upon the earth. Ultimately this material

[1] Jer. 36:4 ff.

world will pass away, the reign of the Messiah will come to an end, and he along with his faithful followers will be given a place in heaven.

The second of these late apocalypses bears the name of Ezra.[1] In a series of seven visions the divine will is disclosed to the seer. In his first vision he learns that God has purposely given this world over to the powers of evil, intending that wickedness should increase rather than diminish with the passage of time, for God does not design to reform the world but to destroy it at an appointed hour. The date of the end is not definitely known by men, but the signs of its approach may be clearly perceived in the degeneracy of the times and in unusual natural phenomena. In the author's own day these signs already indicate that the present age is drawing rapidly to its close.

The first stage in the program of renewal will be a temporary messianic kingdom upon earth. After the period of final tribulation has passed, a new Jerusalem will be revealed, along with the pre-existent Messiah, whose reign is to continue four hundred years. The appearing of the Messiah will mean the utter downfall of

[1] It is often called IV Ezra and is identical with II Esdras, chaps. 3–14, in the Old Testament Apocrypha.

Rome and a gathering together of all Israel to participate in the delights of the new kingdom. When the day for the cessation of the messianic kingdom arrives, all men, even the Messiah included, shall die, and the earth will lie in primeval silence for seven days. Then God himself will appear and institute a seven-year day of judgment. All the dead will be raised, the wicked to receive eternal punishment in Gehenna and the righteous to enter upon a life of eternal bliss in the new heavenly world now to be established.

While the apocalyptic seers often differed widely from one another in the details of their respective pictures, they all represent the same general tendency in the evolution of Jewish hopes. The main features of their outlook may be briefly epitomized. In the first place, their chief interest is in a coming heavenly deliverance rather than in the restoration of a Davidic national kingdom. Hope is not directed toward a glorious national life constructed according to an idealized past model, but the new status of Israel is patterned after a heavenly model yet to be revealed. Frequently the figure of the Messiah does not appear at all, or else he plays a very insignificant rôle. God himself is the

prime actor, and the consummation of salvation is attained only after he has completely destroyed the present world, supplanting it with a new and incorruptible world of heavenly origin.

Sometimes a slight concession was made to the ancient national type of hope by inserting a messianic interregnum—four hundred years or one thousand years, as the case may be—between the end of the present world and the final establishment of the new heavenly world. This intermediate period satisfied the ancient demand for a triumphant earthly dominion of Israel under the rule of a Messiah. But to the apocalyptic writers it is only a passing phase in the scheme of redemption. Still another way of preserving the notion of a Messiah is seen in other apocalypses, where he is represented as a pre-existent, angelic being at the outset. According to this representation he is entirely without earthly connections, but holds a superior heavenly position which makes him an integral part of the new order yet to be revealed.

Other features of apocalyptic hope are of the conventional type. Before the advent of the new age the present world will suffer a

preliminary period of terrible distress. Each seer in turn seems to think that in his own day the period of final agony has begun or is soon to break. A return of Elijah is also expected to fulfil the preparatory mission predicted by Mal. 4:5f. As the Messiah, when present at all, belongs more particularly to the heavenly world, so the powers of evil are similarly transcendentalized. They are no longer merely hostile heathen nations, but demonic forces of the air and the underworld, who array themselves in battle against God, the Messiah, and the angelic host. When a messianic interregnum is given a place in the program, it is usually inserted at this point. Upon a renovated earth the Messiah establishes a new community of saints, gathering together the scattered peoples from all parts of the earth. But there is to be a further outbreak of evil before the ideal order is ultimately established. With the final defeat of all evil powers come the resurrection of the dead and a universal judgment. Then the righteous enter upon a life of eternal blessedness, the wicked are condemned to eternal torment, and the whole cosmos assumes its new, incorruptible status to endure throughout eternity.

V

While the apocalyptic seers were turning their eyes heavenward for visions of the coming deliverance, other Jews continued to cherish the ancient ideal of a new national supremacy to be realized upon the present earth. Sometimes hope was directed toward a definite princely deliverer anointed by God to establish the new kingdom. At other times it was thought that God himself would act directly in the capacity of savior.

Occasionally messianic hopes attached themselves to the Maccabean princes who by successfully resisting the power of Syria secured national independence for the Jews. It is quite probable that Psalm 110 was composed in honor of Simon Maccabeus, whose success in establishing the political independence of Judea stimulated the messianic hopes of the contemporary psalmist. This national type of hope also persists in the book known as the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, composed near the beginning of the first century B.C. The Testaments sometimes make this national hero a priestly king, that is, a descendant of Levi rather than of David. It is declared that the seed of Levi has been chosen by the Lord to be

king over all the nation.[1] On one occasion the coming hero is described as king, priest, and prophet in one, an honor borne by the Maccabean prince John Hyrcanus (135–104 B.C.).[2] This national Messiah is pictured as a mighty ruler who brings an end to all evil, triumphs over all enemies, opens the gates of Paradise to the righteous, and establishes an eternal kingdom of God on earth.

In describing the Jewish national hope the author of the Sibylline Oracles (belonging to the late second century B.C.) revives the imagery of the post-exilic prophets. A consummation of evils is pictured, after which God will send his people a new king "from the sunrise." This ruler will establish an ideal régime, turning the wealth of the world toward Palestine and causing both earth and sea to abound in good things. This period of earthly bliss will be followed by a new outbreak of evil, whereupon God himself shall intervene, destroying all the forces of wickedness and executing judgment upon mankind. This event will be followed by the establishment of a universal kingdom with Jerusalem as its center and God himself as its king.

[1] Reuben 6:10–12; Simeon 5:5.

[2] Test. Levi 8:11–15; Josephus, *Ant.*, XIII, x, 7.

Another late second-century document, the Book of Jubilees, also depicts the advent of the messianic age upon earth. There will come days of great tribulation when calamities follow fast upon one another. These are God's punishments upon an evil generation. But, as the children of Israel return to the path of righteousness, by a gradual process of transformation there will come a time when the activities of Satan will completely cease. The adversaries who have formerly afflicted the people so sorely shall be utterly destroyed. The Lord himself will heal all their ills, and they shall dwell in peace forever. After years of happiness upon the restored earth, the righteous will die, their bones resting peaceably in the earth, while their spirits find a joyous dwelling-place elsewhere.

About the middle of the first century B.C. the national form of hope emerged again in a book known as the Psalms of Solomon. It presents a vivid picture of future hope, including the return of the scattered tribes to Palestine, the destruction of Israel's foes, the execution of judgment upon all sinners, the resurrection of the righteous to eternal life, and the condemnation of the wicked to eternal punishment. At the close of the book the Messiah is described

as a righteous and divinely equipped prince descended from David. He will purify the Jewish people, purge Jerusalem, and destroy the ungodly heathen. Apparently the book reflects the hope of certain pious Jews in the decades of distress following the conquest of Palestine by the Romans in 63 B.C.

Philo, a leading Jew of Alexandria in the first half of the first century, was also a champion of the national type of kingdom to be established upon the present earth. In opposition to the Stoic notion that this world is to be dissolved by a sudden conflagration, Philo affirms the immutability of the universe.[1] Yet he expects a better day for the Jews. When through affliction they have been led to repent, God will prove himself their merciful savior, restoring all the scattered tribes to Palestine in a single day. This sudden deliverance will strike terror into their gentile masters, who will release the Jews because ashamed to hold in subjection men who are better than themselves. The dispersed people are to be led back to the Holy Land by a superhuman figure invisible to all others except to those who are being delivered. God will suddenly effect a complete transformation in

[1] *On the Incorruptibility of the World*, 12 ff.

their condition. Their ruined cities will be rebuilt, the depopulated territory will overflow with inhabitants, unfruitful lands will become fertile, past prosperity will be as nothing when compared with present abundance, and all former adversaries will be put to utter confusion.[1]

The hope of national restoration came to emphatic expression during the first and second centuries A.D. in various attempts to throw off the rule of Rome. The spirit of revolt was directly fostered by the current belief that God would intervene to assist his people and restore their political independence. In early life the Jewish historian Josephus had been a party to the revolt of 66–70 A.D., but later, on becoming friendly toward the Romans, he endeavored to minimize the significance of the political aspirations of his kinsmen. In deference to his Roman readers he accuses the Jews of stupidity in failing to perceive that the emperor, Vespasian, really fulfilled the national Jewish hope. Nevertheless the vitality of this hope is clearly reflected in Josephus' pages. From the first decade of the first century until the fall of Jerusalem the restless people were ever ready to follow any leader who gave promise of ability

[1] *On Curses*, 8 f.; *Rewards and Punishments*, 15–20.

to inaugurate a new era of national independence.[1] As Josephus candidly admits, the revolt against Rome rested upon the belief that God would lead his chosen people to victory and give them a prince who should become ruler of the habitable world.[2] And after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Roman emperors took pains to remove any Jew of Davidic descent who seemed capable of instigating a messianic uprising.

In spite of Rome's watchfulness Jewish belief in the appearing of a national messianic deliverer was still sufficiently strong to inspire another serious revolution, continuing from 132 to 135 A.D. The leader of this revolt is best known by the surname Barcochba, meaning "Son of a Star." He set himself forward as the Messiah raised up by God to deliver the Jews from Roman domination, and his claim was regarded as valid, not only by the masses, but also by leading Jewish teachers such as Rabbi Akiba. The revolt was so enthusiastically supported that the emperor Hadrian summoned from Britain one of his most powerful generals to suppress the uprising. In 135 A.D.

[1] See Josephus, *Ant.*, XVIII, i, 1; XX, v, 1; viii, 5; *War*, II, viii, 1.

[2] *War*, VI, v, 4, an idea repeated by Tacitus *Hist.* v. 13:3 and Suetonius *Vesp.* 4.

the Romans finally triumphed, and Jewish efforts at securing national independence by force of arms came to an end.

VI

With the defeat of Barcochba Jewish hopes were not crushed, but in succeeding generations they became much less spontaneous and vivid. They were now the creation of the schools or of individual rabbis who allegorized or "spiritualized" the heritage from the past. The imagery of prophets and apocalyptists was repeated or recast in academic fashion as new dates were fixed for the expected end of the world. The woes to precede the end, the preliminary mission of Elijah, the advent of the Messiah in one form or another, the glories of his rule, the complete destruction of Israel's enemies, the resurrection, the judgment, and the establishment of a new eternal order continued to be outstanding items of messianic speculation.

Fancy occasionally painted highly overdrawn pictures of the coming age. The fruitfulness of the earth was so magnified that the trees were to bear ripe fruit every day, and prosperity would be so abundant that the righteous would feast upon cake and clothe themselves in silk. An abundance of children would also be insured,

for every wife would bear children every day. Occasionally the delights of the messianic banquet were depicted in extravagant imagery. One delicacy to be served was the flesh of a sea monster slain by God himself in preparation for the feast. Another dish would be the flesh of oxen reared in Paradise and reserved for the occasion. Also the flesh of a mammoth bird, and geese so fat that their feathers fell out spontaneously, would be served. In addition to these delicacies a glorious wine which had been stored up from the beginning of the world in Paradise would be imbibed in great abundance by the saints as they sat upon precious stones about the banquet hall.

These vagaries do not represent the main stream of later Jewish hopes, although they have a very natural basis in the imagery of earlier times. But except for an academic interest Jewish millennial expectations gradually lost their significance. With the hope of national restoration indefinitely deferred by political disaster, and with the failure of apocalyptic prophecy to materialize, faith found more immediate satisfaction in the thought of a blessed future for the individual soul immediately after death.

CHAPTER III

EARLY CHRISTIAN HOPES

The earliest Christians were Jews of Palestine who shared the fears and the hopes of their race. During the first century A.D. the hopes of the Palestinian Jews were very perceptibly influenced by contemporary political events. In the latter part of the previous century Herod the Great had served as a buffer between Rome and the Jews, but after his death in 4 B.C. the yoke of the foreign conqueror became more burdensome and the pressure of this situation soon awakened new discontent in the hearts of the people.

Since Maccabean times the hope of national restoration under the leadership of a Davidic messianic prince had partially faded out, being supplanted in certain circles by the expectation of a heavenly kingdom to be established upon earth either by a direct act of God or through the mediation of an angelic Messiah. But as time passed, the latter hope came no nearer to fulfilment than the former. This delay, and

the new unrest due to increased Roman interference in Palestinian affairs, resulted in a temporary recrudescence of the national type of hope. Jewish enthusiasts were ready to advocate open revolt against Rome, even as the Maccabees had rebelled against the tyranny of the Seleucids. This spirit of revolution was fostered by a belief that Jehovah would employ an earthly representative as his agent in effecting political deliverance for his people.

The first formal outbreak of this new national enthusiasm occurred in connection with a census taken by the Romans as a basis for taxation soon after 6 A.D. A certain Judas of Galilee stirred up the people, declaring that the Jews were being enslaved and that unless they asserted their freedom by appealing to the sword they need not expect God to come to their assistance. If they were to receive deliverance from him, they must show a willingness to sacrifice themselves in his cause. Although Judas and his followers were soon crushed by the might of Rome, the new national movement survived and gathered strength with the years until it precipitated the two disastrous revolutions of 66–70 and 132–35 A.D. All through these years the possibility of a successful national uprising

and the appearing of an earthly messianic deliverer were prominent items in Jewish thinking. Occasionally prospective leaders were successful in attracting followers and in initiating revolutionary movements, but usually the watchful Romans quickly and harshly suppressed all incipient messianic revolts.

Side by side with the new national movement the quietists maintained that the only hope of deliverance lay in the avoidance of political entanglements and the advent of a purely heavenly messianic age to be established by an outright act of Jehovah. The advent of the kingdom would occur at the divinely appointed moment independently of human initiative. In the meantime the sufferings endured by the righteous, being a necessary part of the reign of terror to precede the new age, were neither to be shunned nor to be resisted by force. The primary duty of Jehovah's people was to live righteously lest they be found unworthy of a place in the new kingdom. They did not themselves attempt to transform the present social order into an ideal kingdom of God, nor did they expect this to be done even by Jehovah. They hoped for a complete destruction of the present order and the institution

of a new heavenly society upon a miraculously purified earth.

The political turmoil in Palestine during the first and second centuries A.D. left its mark upon early Christianity. Any individual, such as John the Baptist or Jesus, who attracted the eye of the populace was readily suspected of political designs and was liable to be summarily disposed of by the authorities. These exigencies certainly hastened the end of Jesus' public career, and possibly Herod's arrest of John had been prompted by a fear that this prophet of the desert might use his influence with the people to stimulate revolutionary tendencies. The political contentions between different Jewish parties, and the demand that Jesus' followers take sides in these disputes, made a very lasting impression upon the early Christians. It was this situation that largely furnished them the problems, the terminology, and the imagery employed in shaping their own distinctive hopes.

I

Apparently John the Baptist held to the heavenly apocalyptic, rather than to the national Davidic, type of hope. He heralded the

advent of a day of judgment when a wrathful God would suddenly appear to hew down sinners. There is no intimation that John advocated a revolt against Rome, or that he looked for a Davidic messianic prince to inaugurate a new earthly régime. On the contrary, John took his stand with those who waited upon the Almighty for deliverance and prepared for his coming by purity of life. Like the prophets of old, John warned men of impending judgment and exhorted them to repent lest God strike down sinful Jews along with their hereditary enemies. The vehemence of John and his picturesque activity as a man of the desert suggest that he believed the catastrophic end to be near at hand. Under these circumstances the pressing need of the hour was to deliver a summons to repentance in order that the Jews might be prepared to enter the heavenly kingdom at its coming.

Jesus had been attracted by the preaching of John and had so far approved of the new prophet's message as to receive baptism at his hands. Later, when Jesus started out upon his own career of preaching and teaching, he too showed indifference, if not open hostility, toward the national hopes of the revolutionists.

He seems to have advocated the principles of the quietist party, leaving the solution of political problems entirely in the hands of Jehovah. Although Jesus met his death as a political offender, there is no evidence that he was in reality an advocate of revolt. At times his popularity may easily have led some of his disciples to suspect that he might become a successful revolutionary leader whom God would employ as his agent in a war against Rome, and the ever-suspicious Roman authorities might without difficulty be persuaded to class him with other agitators who had used their popularity for political ends. But apparently Jesus himself entertained no such thought.

Since Jesus did not adopt the hope of the national revolutionists, he probably agreed with John in expecting the ultimate establishment by divine intervention of a purely heavenly régime upon earth. In the meantime, by cultivating a genuinely righteous type of living, men were to prepare themselves for entrance into this new kingdom. Only those who had purified their inner motives and attained a truly godlike quality of life would find favor with Jehovah when he came to inaugurate the new order. Jesus was less severe than John in

describing God's anger. Divine love rather than divine wrath was set in the foreground of Jesus' teaching as he summoned his contemporaries to prepare for the future. Yet those who refused to heed the call of love would undoubtedly be rejected from the kingdom.

In stressing chiefly God's initiative in establishing the new order, both Jesus and John followed the main current of Jewish apocalyptic thinking, in which the Messiah usually played a minor rôle. He was to be prepared in heaven by God himself, in case God chose to use a Messiah at all. This official would be an angel in human form, one like a man, or a heavenly "son of man." But whatever his form, he was a pre-existent being who would appear upon the clouds with his angelic hosts when Jehovah finally determined to act. In the meantime the apocalyptists were chiefly concerned with the preliminary preparation of the people for membership in the coming heavenly kingdom.

Under these circumstances it would not be strange if both John and Jesus said little or nothing about the Messiah's part in the consummation of the people's hopes. Nor would it be surprising if Jesus refrained from speculating about his own official status. To be sure,

soon after his death the disciples began to affirm that he had now been inducted into the office of the heavenly Messiah soon to be revealed, and naturally they concluded that while upon earth he must himself have anticipated this result. It was comparatively easy for them in the later stage of their experience to identify the glorified Jesus, who had now become a heavenly figure, with the coming apocalyptic Messiah. But naturally they had not succeeded in making this identification while Jesus was their personal companion, for current Jewish thinking provided no place for a preliminary earthly career in the program of the apocalyptic Messiah. Nor is it absolutely certain that the earthly Jesus ever altered the current apocalyptic program so radically as to identify himself with its angel-like Messiah.

II

When Jesus was crucified, the previous hopes of his disciples suffered collapse. Evidently they had expected that he would accomplish some sort of release from the burden of ills under which the Jewish people were suffering. Some of his closest companions had left homes and occupations to cast in their lot with him, doubtless expecting to share in a glorious tri-

umph. Then sudden death snatched him away while they were attending the Passover feast in Jerusalem. Now their hopes were shattered and they returned home to resume their former occupations.

What had been the nature of their expectations? It should be remembered that they were Palestinian Jews by birth and training and shared that revulsion of feeling which every loyal Jew naturally entertained toward Roman oppression. They too were inheritors of all past hopes of the Hebrew race, and they belonged to the populace, who were usually ready to see in any striking individual a potential deliverer, or at least a herald of coming deliverance. Under these conditions the very fact that Jesus attracted followers is in itself evidence of his disciples' readiness to regard him either as a possible leader of a national messianic revolt, or else as a prophet whose teaching would presage the advent of an apocalyptic kingdom. While the latter seems to have been Jesus' own expectation, it would not be strange if some of his followers entertained a faltering hope that he would prove to be God's chosen agent for throwing off the Roman yoke. But Jesus died, and neither hope was fulfilled.

After the disciples had returned home to Galilee, first one and then others of their company became convinced that Jesus had appeared to them in person after his death. With this new conviction their shattered hopes underwent a sudden transformation. The earthly Jesus had not proved himself a national deliverer from Roman domination, nor had the apocalyptic kingdom come as the immediate result of his preparatory work. Now a new thought took possession of them. Since the crucified Jesus had appeared to his disciples, they concluded that he had broken away from the realm of the dead in Sheol and had ascended to heaven. And since he had been taken up to heaven, they might continue to believe that this impressive individual would after all prove himself a genuine mediator of messianic deliverance. Their previous desire for a Davidic messianic kingdom was now completely abandoned in favor of a revised form of apocalyptic expectation. Their distinctive contribution to the evolution of the apocalyptic hope—a contribution which seemed to them to be a veritable revelation—was the identification of the heavenly exalted Jesus of their new-found faith with the pre-existent Messiah of contemporary Jew-

ish apocalypticism. Now they confidently affirmed that through the resurrection and the exaltation God had inducted the crucified Jesus into the office of apocalyptic Messiah and had given him authority to inaugurate at an early date a new kingdom upon earth. The words reported from Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost epitomize this new Christian conviction: "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God hath made him both Lord and Christ [that is, "Messiah"], this Jesus whom ye crucified."[1]

III

Christian hopes for the next two generations revolve about this primitive notion of the heavenly Christ soon to return to inaugurate a new régime upon a miraculously renovated earth. This was the message with which the earliest preachers sought to win their Jewish kinsmen, and it was also a fundamental item in the early preaching to the Gentiles. In giving a summary of his work in Thessalonica, Paul reminds the new converts that they had "turned unto God from idols to serve a living and true God and to wait for his son from

[1] Acts 2:36.

heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivereth us from the wrath to come."[1] These same readers are admonished not to forget that the catastrophic end of the world will overtake them suddenly like a thief in the night, and it will fare ill with those who are caught unawares.

At first this longed-for event was thought to be so near realization that practically all Christians would live to witness the day of Jesus' return. It came as a shock to the Thessalonians to have some of their number die before the advent of the Messiah. What a misfortune it was to be snatched away by death before the privilege of entering the new kingdom could be realized. By way of allaying their fears Paul assures the Thessalonians that on the last day he and others, who remain alive until the Lord comes, are to be no more highly favored than are the deceased Christians. And then he ventures a specific description of the final spectacle: "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with a voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be

[1] I Thess. 1:9 f.

caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."[1]

In addressing these same Christians on a later occasion, Paul indulges in further speculations. He follows familiar Jewish imagery in portraying a climactic outbreak of lawlessness at the end of the present age. The last hours of agony have not as yet actually overtaken mortals. Some restraining power still holds in check the "man of sin," the great demonic enemy of Christ. But in due season he will be released to fill the world with all manner of deceptions and agony before the Lord Jesus appears to slay this foe with the breath of his mouth.[2] Ever since the days of persecution under Antiochus Epiphanes, Jewish apocalyptic had anticipated a final period of distress modeled after that of Maccabean times, a kind of darkest hour before the dawn, when hostile powers would make a supreme but vain effort to intrench themselves impregnably in the universe.

On still another occasion Paul enters upon a vivid description of the resurrection as an item of Christian hope. As Christ completes the establishment of his kingdom, the last enemy

[1] I Thess. 4:16 f. [2] II Thess. 2:1–12.

to be conquered is the dreaded death-demon. Deceased Christians are rescued from Sheol, and those still living are so gloriously transformed that death has no more power over their former mortal bodies. This change having been accomplished, the triumph of Christ is complete and "death is swallowed up in victory." Then follows the final act of the great drama of redemption, when Jesus hands over to God the finished product of his triumphant labors.[1]

Paul frequently stresses his belief in the impending end of the world and the speedy coming of the day of judgment. On more than one occasion he signifies his own expectation of living to see that eventful day. He rejoices at the thought of being able to present the converted Thessalonians as his crown of glory "before our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming," and he gladly endures all the afflictions attending his missionary efforts, buoyed up by the thought that he will soon be able to present the fruits of his labors before God on the last day. Frequently he speaks of the brevity of the time preceding the end. The Corinthians are advised to refrain from litigation and await God's impending judgment day for the righting of

[1] I Cor. 15:24–28, 51–57.

their wrongs. Again, Paul refers to the faithful as persons who are daily expecting the revelation of Jesus when the work of every man will be tested by the fire of judgment. The duration of the present age is so brief that the marriage relationship and other social obligations are to be avoided. Presently the new age will break, and the time spent in attending to the ordinary affairs of this present life will be virtually wasted. In writing to the Romans he reminds them that the night is far spent and that the new day, when all shall presently stand before the judgment bar of God, is at hand. Similarly he encourages the Philippians to go on unto perfection until the day of Jesus Christ, confident that the Lord is at hand.

Paul's expectation of a new age and his depreciation of present conditions are an integral part of his cosmic philosophy. As he viewed the world, the supernatural powers were temporarily engaged in a tremendous conflict. On the one side stood Satan and his hosts of evil demons who had virtually taken possession of the earth and had established their dominion even in the regions above the earth. As victims of these demonic powers, men needed to be delivered "out of this present evil world."

Misfortune, sickness, death, and the ills of life in general were regarded as a direct result of Satan's activity. Paul's own infirmity of the flesh was caused by "a messenger of Satan," and the death of Jesus had been brought about by the "rulers of this world," who thereby unwittingly contributed to their own downfall.[1]

Over against Satan and his hosts stood God, the good angels, and now the triumphant heavenly Christ. According to Paul's imagery, Christ had been a pre-existent angelic being of high rank before he came to earth in the person of the historic Jesus. But for having voluntarily submitted to the humiliation of an earthly career, enduring an ignominious death upon the cross, God had rewarded him with even a higher heavenly authority than he had previously possessed. When the forces of evil supposed that they were procuring a triumph by bringing about the death of Jesus they were really making it possible for him to be exalted to a position of lordship in heaven whence he would presently deal a death blow to all demonic powers. Because of his lowly career upon earth, ending in crucifixion, "God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name;

[1] I Cor. 2:6–9.

that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."[1] For Paul the crucified Jesus, exalted to heaven and inducted into the messianic office, virtually stands at the head of the heavenly host already arrayed for battle against Satan and his supporters.

As an outcome of this final conflict the present order of existence is to perish, supplanted by the new heavenly order brought to earth by Jesus. Believers in Christ will be miraculously transformed in the twinkling of an eye, their mortal nature becoming suddenly immortal in order that they may be truly heavenly. But unbelievers will perish along with the present evil world of which they are a part. Paul believes that the earnest of victory is already realized by the individual Christian even before the end comes. The triumphant Christ even now, by his spirit's presence in believers, enables them to work miracles, to heal the sick, and to live fearlessly in this world. For the present they tolerate the evil world, obeying heathen rulers, serving as slaves in

[1] Phil. 2:9–11.

heathen households, living with heathen companions, and submitting to the present social order. This they do because God in his wisdom allows these conditions to continue for a brief space of time. The spirit-filled Christian patiently endures present ills, feeling that he is proleptically a member of the new heavenly kingdom to be ushered in by the speedy advent of Christ. The present evil order is not to be transformed by any gradual process of social betterment brought about through the preaching of Christianity. Catastrophic annihilation awaits the present order, and the task of the Christian missionary is to effect such transformations in the lives of individuals as will prepare them for admission into the new impending kingdom of heaven. Apparently Paul had almost no appreciation of the power of the Christian propaganda to transform society in this present world, a power amply demonstrated in subsequent years when the catastrophic end did not materialize and the new religious movement gradually permeated wider areas of life.

IV

Another distinct phase of early Christian hope has been preserved in the closely related

Gospels of Mark, Matthew, and Luke—the so-called "Synoptic Gospels." Athough these writers do not carry their story beyond the lifetime of Jesus, their books nevertheless give clear indications of the type of Christian hope cherished by them and their contemporaries during the years 70–100 A.D. The particular words or deeds of Jesus which they choose to report often reveal their own special interests, and as a matter of course their interpretations of him and his teaching follow the lines of their own immediate needs.

The Christian hope represented by synoptic tradition is apocalyptic rather than national. These Christians were glad to recall that Jesus had taught non-resistance, that he had admitted the propriety of paying tribute to Caesar, and that he had set aside, as a temptation of Satan, the suggestion to possess himself of the kingdoms of this world. These phases of Jesus' teaching stood his followers in good stead both during the troubled period preceding the fall of Jerusalem and in succeeding years when compelled to face the charge of disloyalty hurled at them by Jewish nationalists. They did not desire the restoration of a Davidic national kingdom, nor did they believe that Jehovah

would employ a revolutionary leader as his messianic agent.

The new kingdom was to be heavenly, and it would be revealed with the return of Jesus. It is very true that this event had been longer delayed than earlier Christians had expected. Yet the momentous day would surely come. When Mark was written, it was still confidently affirmed that Jesus had promised to return while some persons belonging to his own generation were still alive.[1] Mark does not venture to predict the exact date of the end, but he is in a state of lively expectancy. It is incumbent upon all Christians to keep careful watch lest they be taken off their guard, for the Lord will come suddenly, perhaps at evening, at midnight, at early dawn, or in the morning.[2] The other synoptic writers live in this same hope of seeing Jesus come triumphantly upon the clouds of heaven to destroy his enemies and set up his new kingdom.

In its main features the synoptic hope conforms to the hope of the first generation, yet there are some interesting new details in the synoptic picture. These have been occasioned by the delay in Christ's return and by a growing

[1] 8:38; 9:1; 13:3–32; 14:62. [2] 13:33–37.

interest in the saving significance of his previous earthly career. As the years passed, Christians found themselves confronted by new tasks and undergoing new experiences which contributed significantly toward their thinking regarding the events to precede the end of the world. They had endeavored to secure a suitable membership for the new kingdom by preaching to the Jews, but their efforts had not been crowned with abundant success. Then they undertook the task of bringing in the Gentiles; they must go out into the byways and hedges in order to procure the proper quota of guests for the messianic banquet. Once this task was undertaken, they soon assumed that the new message must be proclaimed throughout all gentile lands about the Mediterranean before the end was to be expected. They made haste to accomplish this work, nor did they think its completion a long way off. Even late in the fifties Paul could say that the territory from Palestine northward and westward to Illyricum had been fully evangelized, and since Rome had already received the gospel Paul was desirous of hastening on to Spain.[1] Doubtless at that time, or soon afterward, others were working in Egypt

[1] Rom. 15:19–24.

and North Africa, consequently Mark did not have to think of the return of Christ as a far-distant event even though the evangelization of the nations was a preliminary necessity.[1] For him, as for his contemporaries, the "nations" meant merely the ancient Mediterranean world and not the eastern and western hemispheres of modern times.

The fall of the Jewish nation, accompanied by the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D., was another event of significance for determining certain new features in the evolving Christian hope. At first it had been assumed that the membership of the new kingdom would be constituted solely of Jews who acknowledged belief in the messiahship of Jesus. After a few years' experience the Christian preachers found Gentiles more ready than Jews to accept this new teaching. Even Paul, who had spent a large part of his life evangelizing Gentiles, believed that his own Jewish kinsmen would ultimately be converted and would constitute the bulk of the new kingdom's membership. Israel was the main trunk of the olive tree, while gentile converts were merely ingrafted branches.[2] In synoptic tradition a new stage of development

[1] 13:10. [2] Rom., chaps. 10 f.

is reached, a result due in no small measure to the fall of Jerusalem. The disappointed Christian preacher was now more ready than Paul had been to admit that God had finally cast off his chosen people, and was about to prepare himself a new people selected from among the Gentiles. Were not the fall of the Jewish nation and the destruction of the temple clear evidence that the Jews had been abandoned? The Synoptic Gospels are pervaded by this conviction.

Another feature of Christian thinking which assumed more definite form in synoptic times was the relation of Jesus' earthly career to the coming of the kingdom. The earliest Christians had their eyes fixed steadfastly upon the future. Their life of association with Jesus was a blessed personal memory, rich no doubt both in example and in precept. But official messiahship was thought to belong to the heavenly Christ, and its exhibition before the eyes of men was an affair of the future. This early view had been appropriated by Paul, who in spite of his doctrine of pre-existence never ventured to ascribe messianic glory to the earthly Jesus. Upon earth he had been a model of humility and servitude, unadorned by any

marks of official dignity until God raised him from the dead, thereby designating him the unique son of God with new messianic power.[1]

By the time the Synoptic Gospels were written, reflection upon Jesus' earthly career had discovered numerous evidences of messianic dignity in his reported words and deeds. For example, the demons had recognized him as Messiah and had openly affirmed the fact, notwithstanding his efforts to suppress this information. It was also thought that later on in his career he had tried, though on the whole without success, to reveal this truth to chosen disciples. At Cæsarea Philippi Peter had caught a temporary glimpse of the light, but the next moment he is as blind as ever and would hold out to Jesus the Satanic temptation to establish a victorious earthly kingdom of the national Davidic type. But, according to the synoptic writers, all the while Jesus knows that he is both the herald and the inaugurator of a new heavenly kingdom. Hence his personal companions might certainly have perceived this fact had they not been dull of hearing and short of vision. A later and a wiser generation, to which the synoptic authors themselves belong,

[1] Rom. 1:4; Phil. 2:1–10.

believes itself now in full possession of the truth.

By regarding the earthly Jesus as already in a preliminary way the official apocalyptic Messiah, the synoptic writers showed the new heavenly kingdom to be a realizable, and partly realized, fact in Jesus' lifetime. The beginning of the end had already come. Ever since the days of John the Baptist, when a voice from heaven had officially designated Jesus as the chosen son of God, the kingdom had been proleptically present, so that discerning and aggressive persons were able even then to insure themselves a place therein—"from the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and men of violence take it by force."[1] This preliminary realization is not a substitute for the final, climactic event when Christ will return in full glory, but it serves admirably to strengthen fainting hopes during days of weary waiting. Since the kingdom is partially present, and since Christ's official dignity has already been displayed in preliminary fashion, hope seems surer than it would be if the first act in the final drama had not as yet been staged.

[1] Matt. 11:12.

An evidence of the kingdom's presence during Jesus' lifetime was seen in his teaching activity. As a prophetic teacher he was to the synoptic writers not only a herald of the coming age, but its actual minister. The necessity of cultivating a righteous life in preparation for the kingdom's advent was a commonplace of apocalyptic thinking. But Jesus' synoptic admirers believed his message to be so significant that to heed his words and follow his precepts meant the anticipatory inauguration of the kingdom of God on earth, realized in the lives of his disciples. Jesus' message falling as seed into the hearts of men and transforming their lives by its power marks the beginning of the new régime whose full glory is not yet manifested. But the potency of the seed insures successful growth and final fruitage. It is easy for moderns to view this success in terms of the gradual transformation of individuals and of society by a long process of historical development. But it was equally easy, if not inevitable, for Christians in the last half of the first century to picture the consummation of the kingdom as a catastrophic event following a brief and obscure preliminary period of existence upon earth extending from the beginning of

Jesus' public career until the day of his return in glory.

A further evidence that the new order had already forced itself proleptically upon the earth is seen in the miracles of Jesus. The synoptists, like Paul, hold to a dualistic view of the world. Normally Satan and his emissaries are very much at home in this present world, but when Jesus appears the demons recognize that he is the mediator of a new order from above, deadly opposed to their régime. In the story of the temptation, when the representatives of the old and the new orders, respectively, encounter one another, Jesus is easily victor. Henceforth Satan's subjects—the demons—immediately recognize Jesus, and, full of fear, they hurl imprecations at him whenever he comes into their presence. Since sickness, storms, and other harmful phenomena were credited to demonic activity, Jesus as healer and miracle-worker is the mediator of a new régime, the minister of the kingdom of God upon earth. To be sure, the new kingdom is not yet fully revealed, and its benefits properly accrue only to those who exercise faith, which is the indispensable condition of membership in the new order to be finally established by

Christ at his coming. In the meantime, however, the ultimate victory has been foreshadowed by the success of the earthly Jesus, who has bound the strong man Satan and plundered his house, wresting from him a part of his power over mortals.

Still other evidences that the anticipated blessings of the heavenly kingdom of God were realized in part during Jesus' lifetime appear somewhat less pervasively in the Synoptic Gospels. When John the Baptist is equated with Elijah, whose return was to precede the advent of the new order, the beginning of Jesus' public career is assumed to be the initial appearance of the new age. And since the new kingdom, with an earthly Messiah at its head, temporarily exists within the present world, might it not be placed in loose relationship with the national Davidic type of hope? This possibility appealed to certain Christians in synoptic times, and they proceeded to show that Jesus fulfilled the messianic ideals of the ancient prophet and was also a lineal descendant of David. It was very true that the kingdom established by Jesus, as described by these same Christians, was not of the original Davidic type, but it strengthened their faith in the coming of

the apocalyptic kingdom, when they were able to believe that all the credentials of every type of messianic hope were summed up in Jesus.

While Christians of this period were discovering that the heavenly kingdom of God had already been introduced upon earth, they did not abandon the hope of a catastrophic end of the present world. They awaited impatiently the return of Christ and the annihilation of evil when distresses would cease for the righteous and the wicked would receive due punishment. The signs of Christ's coming and the days of excessive tribulation to precede the end are items of vital interest to all the synoptic writers. In the wars of the Jews against Rome, in earthquakes, in famines, and in their own sufferings as Christian missionaries, they see premonitions of the final world-catastrophe. They refuse to follow contemporary claimants to national messianic leadership, whom they regard as false Christs or false prophets aiming to lead astray the elect. On the contrary, they cling to faith in a returning apocalyptic Messiah, confident that God will not permit the days of tribulation to continue beyond his elect's powers of endurance.[1]

[1] Mark 13:19–22.

V

The Gospel of John represents a very interesting phase of development in early Christian hopes. Its author has no sympathy with the national ambitions of the Jews, and he is only half-heartedly interested in apocalyptic expectations. A return of Jesus is predicted, and several references are made to the resurrection on the "last day,"[1] but in the immediate context these more primitive ideas are overlaid by other notions having little or nothing in common with traditional views. Although when about to be removed by death Jesus says, "I come again," the purpose of his return as described by John is not to introduce an apocalyptic kingdom upon earth. On the contrary, he comes to remove faithful Christians from their earthly labors to mansions awaiting them in heaven.[2] This use of popular apocalyptic terminology might possibly satisfy one who still believed in a literal second coming, but the author's own thinking has moved far away from this primitive imagery.

Similarly references to the resurrection and the judgment are hardly more than mere points

[1] 5:21–29; 6:39–54; 11:24–26; 12:48.

[2] 14:2 f.

of departure for the exposition of a fundamentally different type of teaching. At one moment the final resurrection of the dead and the execution of judgment on the last day are affirmed as prerogatives of the returning Jesus, but in the next breath our author declares that resurrection to eternal life is a present experience, which virtually nullifies the older teaching about judgment. The matter is stated very emphatically: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live."[1] Yet, side by side with these affirmations regarding the determining effect of Jesus' present work, we again read: "The hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his [Jesus'] voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment."[2] A perusal of the Gospel as a whole, however, makes it perfectly clear that the author is

[1] 5:24 f. [2] 5:28 f.

chiefly interested in the resuscitating and determining power of Jesus' teaching rather than in traditional apocalyptic imagery. There is no outright opposition to the latter, but it is largely divested of its earlier importance by a new interpretation of the significance of Jesus' mission upon earth.

According to this Gospel, the kingdom of God had already been inaugurated through the earthly work of Jesus. This kingdom is not a rehabilitation of Jewish national supremacy, nor is it a mere foreshadowing of an imminent apocalyptic régime to be consummated by an impending catastrophe. Yet it is purely heavenly in its nature, a kingdom not of this world, but from above; neither national nor apocalyptic, but a kingdom of divine truth. When asked if he is a king, Jesus affirms, "To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."[1] Thus a new heavenly régime has been begun upon earth through the communication of newly revealed divine knowledge brought down from heaven by Jesus. Those who enter this kingdom must themselves

[1] 18:37.

be born from above,[1] and the new order approaches consummation gradually as men in increasing numbers appropriate heavenly wisdom and cultivate the truly enlightened type of life.

Thus the new age has already dawned. It began with the incarnation when the divine Logos, the "Word," entered the fleshly abode, thereby becoming concretely observable by men. The process of growth was greatly stimulated through Jesus' public ministry as he went about declaring himself to be the embodiment of God's message of truth and light to a world lying in darkness. As many as received his word became children of the light and full-fledged members in the new kingdom of truth. After Jesus' death the task of perpetuating the kingdom fell to the lot of the disciples, who were henceforth possessed of an especial measure of the Spirit to guide them into all truth. As this revelation is conveyed through ever-expanding circles, the establishment of the new order becomes more nearly complete. The process is a gradual one, and the results are to be obtained through the activity of human agents. Yet it would be a

[1] 3:3, 5.

grave error to imagine that the writer of the Fourth Gospel regarded the new régime as in any fundamental sense a product of human effort. Its founder, Jesus, came from heaven with the new light, a divine enlightenment equivalent to a new birth was necessary for admission into the new society, and the gift of eternal life which membership conferred was synonymous with the knowledge of God as revealed in the person and work of Jesus Christ.[1]

The hope of Christians of the Johannine type was pre-eminently individualistic. They retained certain formal aspects of the older apocalyptic hope, and spoke of a far-off day when the dead would be raised and the final judgment enacted. But their primary interest was to secure the salvation of the individual by establishing in him the new kingdom of divine enlightenment. When this task was accomplished, the believer had undergone a veritable resurrection to life, and had nothing to fear for the future. On the other hand, he who rejected the light was immediately and eternally condemned. At death the deceased went directly to his reward, and his status would not be altered by any event to occur on the day of judg-

[1] 17:3.

ment. The Fourth Gospel offers no immediate hope of escape from the present order of existence through any sudden annihilation of evil. Hope lay rather in appropriating the divine assistance which God had provided. It was not Jesus' purpose to destroy this world, nor would he be unduly hasty in removing from his disciples the pressure of its ills. But he would give them ample power to resist evil, and they were guaranteed a blessed abode with him in heaven when their work upon earth was accomplished.

VI

With the passing of the years, as the Lord delayed his return and Christians began to feel more at home in the present world, they easily drifted into the habit of believing that the new régime had already been inaugurated, at least in some substantial preliminary manner. This tendency, as we have had occasion to note, was already manifest in the Synoptic Gospels, and it had made remarkable progress in the circle of Christian thinking represented by the Gospel of John. But among those groups of Christians who first experienced persecution at the hands of the Roman authorities, the smoldering embers of the apocalyptic hope occasionally

burst into new flames. New trials readily suggested the last woes depicted in apocalyptic imagery, and the helplessness of the Christians to defend themselves against the gigantic power of Rome impelled them to picture a purely supernatural triumph to be procured by the coming of Christ with his angelic hosts.

The first epistle of Peter was written primarily to encourage Christians in an hour of persecution. They were admonished to endure present ills, being comforted by the thought that the end of all things was at hand. Their sufferings merely marked a preliminary stage in the final period of agony which apocalyptic thinking placed immediately before the day of judgment. On that day the sufferings of their enemies would be manifoldly greater than their own had previously been.[1] Since Jesus is on God's right hand, and endowed with supreme authority, the hope of the persecuted Christians is secure. Present distresses are as nothing in comparison with the praise and glory which presently are to be theirs when Christ is suddenly revealed coming in power on the clouds to destroy sinners and establish a kingdom upon earth.[2]

[1] 4:7, 17 f.

[2] 1:5–7; 4:12 f.; 5:4.

The Book of Revelation is the classic Christian document exhibiting the use of the apocalyptic hope as an antidote to the sufferings of the persecuted. The book reflects conditions affecting more or less widely groups of churches in Western Asia Minor in the last decade of the first century. By this time the worship of the Roman emperor had been established at various places about the eastern Mediterranean, and certain zealous officials of the cult discovered that Christians would neither confess the lordship of Caesar nor offer incense before his image. Some of their number had been arrested, put to the test, and severely punished for their refusal to conform to Rome's demand. The author of Revelation, who styles himself simply "John your brother and fellow partaker in tribulation," was among the suspected. He had either fled, or been banished, to the lonely island of Patmos, where he meditated much upon the recent misfortunes of Christians and painted in gorgeous colors his picture of coming deliverance.

One Lord's Day, while reflecting upon the troubled state of affairs, John had a remarkable experience. He seemed to hear a mighty voice speaking to him and to see wonderful visions in

heaven, disclosing the secrets of God's purposes in history. This type of experience was not an entirely novel thing. It had already been depicted in numerous Jewish apocalypses, with some of which John was no doubt familiar. The stress of his own times, the memory of similar periods of tribulation in the history of the Jews, and his own ecstatic temperament, all combined to produce that exalted and confident state of mind which enabled him to portray with absolute assurance the speedy advent of Christ to bring an end to the present world. The daring flights of his own imagination, whether resulting from deliberate reflection or from ecstatic inspiration, or from both, greatly strengthened his powers of endurance, and he passed on his convictions to his afflicted friends in the hope they they too might be similarly heartened. The theme of his book is tersely stated: "Behold he [Christ] cometh with the clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they that pierced him; and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over him."[1] At the moment Christians were mourning because of their troubles, but in future their sorrow would be turned into joy as they beheld their enemies

[1] Rev. 1:7.

lamenting at the approach of the victorious Christ.

The main features in John's portrayal of the Christian hope stand out clearly.[1] First he addresses a series of warnings to the churches, admonishing the members to purify themselves in preparation for approaching judgment. In all apocalyptic teaching purity of life is a prerequisite to admission into the new kingdom. Sometimes John is able to commend the churches for their past conduct, while at other times he utters harsh reprimands. He is particularly severe upon those who show a disposition to compromise with heathenism. Firmly believing that the present world is soon to perish, he adopts a policy of open defiance rather than one of adjustment to prevailing conditions. Other Christians may have been less confident that God would intervene thus violently to relieve them of their foes, and consequently they may at times have been disposed to adopt a conciliatory policy. With such a course of procedure John had not the slightest sympathy.

[1] For an analytical paraphrase of Revelation see S. J. Case, *The Book of Revelation*, an outline Bible-study course of the American Institute of Sacred Literature, Hyde Park, Chicago, Illinois; reprinted from the *Biblical World*, L (1917), 192–200, 251–64; 321–28; 382-90.

After delivering warnings to the churches, the seer proceeds to describe his heavenly visions. In the first place, he assures suffering Christians that the power and glory of heaven remain unsurpassed. God is seen seated upon his throne and resembling a magnificent, jewel-bedecked rainbow. He is surrounded by a stately court of angelic beings, who cease not day nor night to proclaim his holiness, declaring him to be "the Lord God Almighty, who was, and who is, and who is to come." Christ, also seen in God's presence, exhibits his superior power by opening a magic book whose seals no one heretofore had been able to break. To this mighty Christ the angelic choir renders fulsome praise, ascribing to him honor and glory and eternal dominion. Surely persecuted Christians who are suffering in loyalty to this almighty God and his powerful Christ need have no doubt as to their ultimate vindication.

Then follows a series of visions revealed in the great picture book which the heavenly Christ has unsealed. These make evident the fact that earthly woes are not due to God's neglect of his creatures, but are a part of the divine plan. Assurances of God's care become doubly strong when John sees the souls of

Christian martyrs stored up under the altar in heaven where they cry to God to avenge their blood. Their cry is not in vain, but before they can be avenged their fellow-servants and brethren must be given a fitting opportunity to win the martyr's crown. Amid all the terrors of these last days, when the earth is to be smitten with destruction, the seas troubled, and the sun darkened, God's saints shall be preserved in safety, having been marked by a seal upon their foreheads. Language almost fails the author when he tries to describe his vision of the glory awaiting those who have come out of the great tribulation into the presence of God: "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun strike upon them, nor any heat: for the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them unto fountains of waters of life: and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes."[1]

After learning from his visions that God intends to smite the earth with still greater woes, John is privileged to observe the future activity of the demonic powers. He sees a picture of the battle to be staged between the

[1] 7:16 f.

angelic hosts of heaven led by Michael and the demonic hosts with Satan at their head. The consequent ejection of Satan from heaven means the inauguration of the period of final tribulation for mortals, upon whom the demons now center their attack. During this period of three and a half years Christians will endure great agony, but their ultimate rescue is certain. Nor is the day of their deliverance to be long postponed. Even Satan himself knows that he has been allotted "but a short time" for his final onslaught upon Christians.

During the period of great tribulation Satan's chief representatives upon earth are the arrogant Roman emperor and the priest in charge of his cult, the two individuals whom John pictures as "beasts." The zealous priest will require even those engaged in the ordinary pursuits of life to be provided with a certificate showing that they have taken part in the rites of the imperial cult. The number that would be stamped upon the certificate suggests to John a veiled way of revealing to his readers the identity of the imperial "beast" to rule during this final period of distress. By selecting 666 as the cryptic number John points to Nero, the number being obtained by adding together

the numerical values of the letters in the words "Nero Caesar." This thoroughgoing insistence upon the worship of the emperor will be an especially severe blow to the Christians, but their courage is reinforced by a new picture. A band of triumphant saints is seen singing an exclusive hymn of praise to God in honor of his saving power.

John's description of the afflictions to be endured by the righteous is followed by a still more vivid picture of the destruction and doom to overtake sinners. Angels of destruction sent by God smite the earth with portions of the divine wrath, but the punishment to be meted out to Rome is especially severe. Again in a veiled way John assures his readers that the end of the imperial régime is near. The demonic ruler who holds sway in the period of final tribulation is reckoned as the eighth emperor, yet he is one of the seven who have preceded him; that is, he is a reincarnation of a previous ruler. Since Nero, already identified by the number 666, was remembered as the worst of the Roman emperors, his return seemed to John a fitting climax for the course of Satan's activities upon the earth. In order to assure Christians that the day of their

deliverance is not far off, John informs his readers that the emperor (Domitian, 81–96 A.D.) under whom they are now suffering will be followed by another who shall reign for only a brief period before the demonic Nero returns to set up his Satanic dominion which is to endure just three and a half years.[1] Hence John must have expected the end to come early in the second century A.D.

John's imagination glows with a white heat as he pictures the final scenes in the impending world-drama. Seven angels are commissioned to pour forth upon earth the last plagues. The heathen Romans are to be smitten with pestilences, the sea and the rivers are to be turned into blood, the heat of the sun is to become unendurable, the throne of the emperor is to be demolished, and the river Euphrates is to be dried up in order that mythical demonic hordes from the East may assemble for the final conflict at Har-Magedon. Then follows a vivid description of Rome's downfall, when all her wealth and power perish in an instant. "Woe, woe, the great city, wherein all that had their ships in the sea were made rich by reason of her costliness! for in one hour she is made desolate.

[1] 11:2 f.; 12:6, 14; 13:5.

Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye saints, and ye apostles, and ye prophets; for God hath judged your judgment on her."[1]

The destruction of Rome will be followed by further misfortunes for Satan and his subjects, who are now to be driven from the earth as effectively as they had previously been ejected from heaven. This victory is to be accomplished by the armies of heaven under the leadership of a warrior Messiah. With eyes like flaming fire and wearing many crowns, this champion comes forth in blood-sprinkled garments to perform a mighty feat of carnage. Only the emperor and his prophet are saved alive, but this is in order that they may be cast into the burning lake of fire. All other foes are slaughtered, birds of heaven being summoned to feast upon the carcasses of the slain. At the same time Satan himself, bound by an angel, is cast into the abyss.

At this point John introduces into his picture a feature not previously exhibited in Christian apocalyptic thinking, but one familiar in certain Jewish circles. He describes an intermediate messianic age to be established on earth for one thousand years—a millennium—when the

[1] 18:19 f.

souls of those who have died for the faith are restored to earth where they spend one thousand years of bliss with Christ. As in similar Jewish imagery, the old prophetic idea of a blessed earthly kingdom is thus reinstated, but its glory is quite outshone by the picture of the new heavenly kingdom to be established at the close of the millennium.

The final picture in Revelation is one of complete triumph. As the millennium draws to an end, Satan will be released from the abyss to assemble new enemies from more distant parts to attack the saints now dwelling with Christ in Jerusalem. But a devouring fire will descend from heaven to destroy Satan's armies, and he himself will be cast into the lake of fire where the persecuting emperor and his priest have been in torment during the past one thousand years. Then comes the final judgment when all the dead shall be raised to receive eternal rewards and punishments according to their deserts. A new heaven and a new earth will be revealed, and the righteous shall dwell eternally in a new Jerusalem, let down from heaven and adorned as a bride for her husband. But the wicked shall be cast into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. The author

well-nigh bankrupts language in his efforts to describe the glories of the New Jerusalem with its jeweled gates and its golden streets.

John not only holds out to his suffering brethren the hope of participation in the glories of the New Jerusalem, but he insists that his visions insure an early relief for their present distresses. The return of Christ to destroy the power of Satan and to establish the millennial interregnum is to be looked for in the very near future. John is convinced that his own visions are God's means of showing unto his servants "the things which must shortly come to pass."[1] The book is not to be sealed up for use in some distant day; it is designed for immediate application to the present conditions of Christians, "for the time is at hand."[2] And in order doubly to emphasize his conviction that no long years would intervene to demand alterations in his imagery, he solemnly pronounces a curse upon any man who shall add to or subtract from the words written in his book.[3] Yet how freely millenarians in subsequent years have discarded his warning, distorting his language to suit the flights and the flightiness of their own imaginations.

[1] 22:6 [2] 22:10 [3] 22:18

While this sketch of early Christian hopes shows certain variations due in large measure to occasional demands for readjustment, their main content during the first century was distinctly Jewish and apocalyptic. Even the first Christians had no incentive for desiring the restoration of an idealized Jewish nationality, and this type of hope became utterly impossible when the new religion abandoned Palestine and made its home in gentile lands. But at no time in this period did Christians generally come to realize that it was their mission to win the world by a gradual process of spiritual transformation. Only in the Fourth Gospel does the consciousness of this task seem to be awakening, but even here it does not come to clear and full expression. In the main, Christianity still felt itself so foreign to the genius of the present world that conquest by a normal process of expansion seemed out of the question. To Christians of that day the catastrophic end of the present order and the inauguration of a miraculous kingdom from above seemed to be the only adequate way of expressing worthily their faith in the triumphant power of God.

CHAPTER IV

LATER CHRISTIAN HOPES

As the Christian movement gathered momentum, gradually winning for itself a more substantial place within the ancient world, the millennial type of hope suffered a corresponding loss of popularity. The lapse of time proved that the vivid expectancy of earlier days had not been justified, and the success of Christianity on the present earth lessened the demand for an early catastrophic end of the world. With the passing of the years believers became increasingly content to hope for a blessed abode in heaven to be attained by individual souls immediately after death. Millennial speculations were not always completely abandoned, but they were projected farther and farther into the future, thereby losing their original spontaneity and becoming more doctrinaire in character. It remains to sketch briefly the course of this development from the second century A.D. down to the present time.

I

While the new religion was struggling for recognition in the Roman state, certain Christian leaders still cherished millennial hopes. As early as the first decade of the second century a handbook of instruction prepared for the use of Christian communities in Syria closed with the admonition to watch, "for you know not the hour in which our Lord cometh." The last days are to be times of distress when lawlessness will multiply and deceivers arise to lead astray the faithful. Then will appear the arch-deceiver working wonders and signs and taking possession of the earth. When evil has reached its zenith a fire of testing will fall upon the earth, destroying many, but Christians will be saved. A rift will be seen in the heavens, a trumpet will sound, the dead saints will be raised, and the Lord will appear coming upon the clouds of heaven.[1]

In the next decade Ignatius of Antioch and his contemporary Polycarp of Smyrna believed that they were already living in the last times when the end of all things was imminent. In this confidence each of these worthies ultimately met a martyr's death, exhorting their con-

[1] Didache, chap. 16.

temporaries to fear the wrath to come when the wicked would be cast into the unquenchable fires of eternal torment, while deceased believers would be raised to participate in the triumphs of the judgment day and to reign with Christ in glory.[1]

Another Christian of this period, probably residing in Egypt, expresses the same type of hope in a document wrongly ascribed to Barnabas. He exhorts his readers to shun the works of lawlessness, loathing the error of the present time, in order that they may be favored in the time to come. The season of final distress is already drawing to a close, the time having been shortened in order that the victorious Christ might more quickly enter into his inheritance. The imminent day of judgment will bring an end to all evil. Those who crucified Jesus will behold him descending from heaven attired in regal splendor to punish the wicked and to receive into his kingdom all who have suffered affliction in consequence of their loyalty to him. As a preliminary stage in the process by which the creation is finally to be restored to its original perfection, through the remission of

[1] Ignatius, *Eph.* 11:1; 16:1 f.; *Mag.* 5:1; Polycarp, *Phil.* 2:1 f.; 5:2; 11:2; Martyr. Poly. 2:3; 11:2.

their sins Christians have already become a new type, a re-created humanity. The full consummation of this process is presently to be realized when believers are to be made perfect. The end is to be attained six thousand years after the creation, each day of creation week representing one thousand years in the duration of the world. Then God will send his son to abolish the reign of the lawless ones, to judge the ungodly, to change sun, moon, and stars, and to introduce a rest day of one thousand years answering to the Sabbath following the work of creation. At the close of this millennium a still greater transformation will be accomplished, inaugurating an eighth day which is the beginning of another world at present typified by the Christian Sunday.[1]

Papias, a Christian of Hierapolis, also belonging to the first half of the second century, portrayed the blessings of the impending millennium in extravagant imagery drawn freely from Jewish sources. In fact he believed that Jesus himself had thus pictured the future. The new age when the righteous will rise from the dead and reign in glory will be attended by a marvelous transformation in the fertilty of

[1] Barnabas 4:1–3; 7:9 ff.; 6:11 ff.; 15:1–9; 21:3.

the earth. Vines will grow so luxuriantly that each vine will yield ten thousand shoots, each shoot ten thousand branches, each branch ten thousand bunches, each bunch ten thousand grapes, and each grape twenty-five measures of wine. Grain will be similarly fruitful, each stalk producing ten thousand ears, and each ear ten pounds of fine flour. Not only will the products of the earth grow in great abundance, but ferocious beasts will become docile, submitting peacefully to the dominion of mankind.[1]

The unknown author of II Peter, perhaps a contemporary of Papias, knew individuals in the Christian church of his day who were skeptical regarding both the catastrophic end of the world and the expected return of Christ. These doubters affirmed the perpetuity of the present order and remarked upon the fact that time had denied the first Christians' confident declarations of faith in Christ's early return. The writer of II Peter upbraids these skeptics for their lack of faith and apologizes for the delay by affirming that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day. A more practical explanation is that this delay is designed to give a larger

[1] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* V. 33:3 f.

number of persons an opportunity to repent and be saved. Notwithstanding the postponement of the event, the author is himself confident that the hope of the catastrophic end will soon be realized.[1]

At Rome in the middle of the second century the hope of a new age is entertained by the devout Christian Hermas. He is oppressed by a keen sense of human sinfulness, from which he seeks ultimate release through the inauguration of a new order. In a vision he is confronted by a terrible beast whose head is marked by four colors. It is explained to Hermas that the black color represents the present world, the fiery red signifies impending destruction by blood and fire, the golden color typifies faithful Christians who pass through the fiery trials of the last days, purified like gold from the furnace, and the white stands for the new age to come. God himself, who created the world, will effect the final change. The heavens, the mountains, the hills, and the seas will be removed as God in fulfilment of his promise makes all things level for his elect. In the meantime by performing righteous deeds and enduring patiently the great tribulation

[1] II Pet. 3:1–13.

men are to prove themselves worthy of the divine favor, but sinful Christians and all Gentiles will be rejected. In this world to come the righteous shall flourish as the luxuriant foliage of summer, but the wicked shall wither and be burned as fuel. The end is imminent. Jesus' earthly career had inaugurated the period to which the last days belong, and the consummation will arrive as soon as Christianity has done its work. Hermas sees the tower representing the church so near to completion that the workmen have to be dismissed for a short time awaiting the return of the owner, Christ. Although his coming is delayed, Hermas is assured that the owner will presently arrive to inspect the structure and that the tower shall be brought to completion quickly.[1]

Another Roman Christian, Justin, writing soon after the middle of the second century, stoutly affirms his belief in the near approach of the end of the world. As he viewed the present world, it seemed to be so thoroughly infested by demons that an ultimate destruction by fire was inevitable. Prompted by

[1] Hermas, *Vis.* I. 3:4; II. 2:7; III. 8:9; 9:5; IV. 1–3; *Sim.* IV. 1–8; IX. 5; 12:3.

the demons the Jewish and gentile enemies of Christians have instituted frightful persecutions which Justin expects to continue until Christ comes again to visit eternal punishment upon all the powers of evil. This climactic event is delayed in order to give the human race time to repent. In fact Justin thinks that the delay may continue long enough to give some persons yet unborn an opportunity for repentance. But when the number of the faithful, foreknown by God, is complete, the end will come. In the meantime hostility toward Christians will increase until the man of apostasy, the Antichrist, appears. Then suddenly Christ will return upon the clouds accompanied by the angelic hosts, to deal out deadly punishments to all foes of the Christians. Christ himself will execute judgment, condemning to eternal fire Satan and all his servants, both demonic and human. The dead will be raised in order that the righteous may be endowed with blessed immortality while wicked men and the devils are condemned to a life of conscious and eternal torment in the fires of hell. The present evil world will be consumed by a devastating conflagration, even as the effete world of former times perished in the flood.

Justin expects the restoration of Jerusalem and the transformation of Palestine in accordance with the post-exilic prophetic model. He freely adduces Old Testament passages in support of his contention that the transformed land of Canaan is to be the future possession of the saints. From all parts of the world those who have believed in Christ shall escape the impending judgment and inherit the resting-place prepared for them in Jerusalem. Here Christ himself will dwell with the faithful, distributing to them goodly possessions in the land even as in earlier times Joshua had allotted Canaan to the Israelites. Jerusalem, rebuilt in magnificent fashion, will become the capital of the new heavenly kingdom on earth to endure one thousand years. Although Justin himself entertains no doubts, he candidly admits that many sincere Christians of his day have rejected this realistic picture of the restoration of Jerusalem and the return of Christ for a millennial reign upon earth.[1]

Millennial hopes found still another ardent champion in Irenaeus of Lyons, who flourished in the latter part of the second century A.D. In

[1] Justin, *Apol.* I. 28, 45, 51 f., 60; II. 7 f.; *Dial.* 30 f., 39, 58, 80 f., 110, 113, 121, 138 f.

opposition to doubters, particularly among gnostic Christians, he expounds his views in doctrinaire fashion, employing both Old and New Testament proof-texts. The present world is to endure six thousand years, corresponding to the six days of creation. As the end draws near, suffering will be greatly increased until at last the incarnation of all wickedness will be made manifest in the person of the Antichrist. After he has completed his devastating work he will take his seat in the temple at Jerusalem, reigning for three and a half years. Irenaeus indulges in much fanciful speculation about the identity of the beast designated by the number 666 in the Book of Revelation, but finally remarks that it is impossible to pronounce positively upon the identity of the Antichrist. When the allotted time of Satan's rule has expired, Christ will come in heavenly glory, triumphing over all his foes. This event is to be followed by the resurrection of the saints, a veritable rehabilitation of the fleshly body. The faithful dwell henceforth in a new kingdom established by Christ upon earth, in fulfilment of the promise that the meek shall inherit the earth. This period of millennial bliss corresponds to the seventh day

of rest following the six days of creation described in Genesis. During this time the earth is marvelously fruitful. Jerusalem is magnificently rebuilt, and the righteous joyfully become accustomed to the new life of incorruption. After this preliminary régime of bliss has passed, a final judgment of all the world is instituted, and the new heaven and the new earth are revealed. In this final state of blessedness the redeemed shall live in the presence of God, world without end.[1]

In North Africa at the very beginning of the third century millennial hopes find another advocate in Tertullian.[2] With him, as with Irenaeus, discussion of the subject is called forth by the opposition of both Jewish and Christian doubters. In his treatise on the resurrection of the flesh Tertullian cites the imagery of Paul and of the Revelation as proof of a millennial reign of Christ upon earth when believers will be raised bodily to participate in the privileges of the new kingdom. There must occur first a falling away, that is, a decay of the present Roman Empire, before the Antichrist appears

[1] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* V. 25–36.

[2] Representative passages are *Apol.* 23; *Shows* 30; *Against Marcion* III. 25; *On Resur.* 24 f.

to wage war upon the church of God. After the work of the Antichrist is finished Christ will come suddenly upon the clouds in heavenly glory, causing the whole earth to quake and filling with lamentations all who are not Christians. The advent of Christ will provide a magnificent spectacle, compensating believers for their sacrifice in refraining from attendance upon the public entertainments of the heathen. The triumphant splendor of the Lord, the exultation of the angelic host, the glory of the rising saints, the blessedness of the new kingdom, and the splendors of the new Jerusalem inflame the imagination of Tertullian almost beyond even his exceptional powers of vivid description. Although God alone knows the exact moment when Christ will return, yet the event is imminent. The work of Jesus and the apostles belongs to the "last times," and the end of the present order may be expected to occur at an early date.

The advent of Christ will be followed by the first resurrection, when the righteous will be revived to participate in the glories of the new Jerusalem let down from heaven to earth. Tertullian believes that this new city is occasionally seen even now suspended in the clouds.

The new kingdom will endure one thousand years in order to provide the righteous adequate compensation for their earthly suffering. Throughout this period the saints continue to be raised earlier or later according to the amount of blessing they severally deserve. At the expiration of the millennium the final judgment will be enacted, when Christians will be changed into the likeness of angels and transported to their final reward in heaven. The present earth will be completely destroyed by fire, and all its inhabitants cast into the furnace of everlasting torment. Tertullian gloats over the scene of a world in flames, where Christianity's persecutors endure fires more fierce than any they have kindled around believers whom they have burned at the stake.

Throughout the third century and early in the fourth, millennial hopes continued to have representatives in different parts of the Christian world. Returning to Rome, in the first half of the third century we find Hippolytus, a pupil of Irenaeus, fixing more specifically the date of the end, which is to occur not only six thousand years from creation, but also five hundred years after the birth of Jesus. It is by

no means certain, however, that Hippolytus followed Irenaeus in expecting the earth to be the seat of the millennial kingdom.

A generation or two later realistic millennial views find a vigorous champion in Commodian of North Africa.[1] He summons unbelievers to repentance in preparation for the speedy end of the world, which is to take place when the impending seventh persecution breaks upon the church. In the tribulation of the last days Nero will reappear as the first Antichrist, taking possession of Rome and afflicting Christians for three and a half years. Then a second Antichrist, a man from the Persians, will appear upon the scene to conquer Nero, destroy Rome, and establish himself in Judea, where the Jews will render him worship. Finally Christ appears, destroying Antichrist and his hosts, subjecting the nations, and establishing his kingdom upon earth. The Christian dead will be raised to share the joys of the new Jerusalem. Here the saints will live in peace, marrying and begetting children for one thousand years. The earth will yield abundantly, and all the revenues of the world will pour into the Holy City. In the meantime all the wicked are shut up in

[1] *Against the Gods of the Heathen*, chaps. 43–45.

torment, awaiting final condemnation when the millennial reign of Christ comes to an end.

Early in the fourth century Lactantius,[1] another native of North Africa, offers a fresh exposition of millennial views, based largely upon the Sibylline books. Since God completed the creation in six days, the present world will endure six thousand years, and since the first man was created on the sixth day, the creation of the new man, the Christian people, marks the beginning of the last age of the world. Already the overthrow of the weary and wasting world is imminent. First there will come a period of dire distress. Righteousness will diminish almost to the vanishing-point, while all kinds of wickedness will thrive. So thorough will be the decay that "there will be no faith among men nor peace nor kindness nor shame nor truth, and thus also there will be neither security nor government nor any rest from evils." Wars will rage throughout the earth, but with particular severity in Egypt as a penalty for her foolish superstitions. This political chaos will be the direct result of the downfall of the Roman Empire, when the dominion of the world will again return to

[1] *Divine Institutes* VII. 14–26.

the East. The Sibyl has decreed that Rome is doomed to perish by the judgment of God because it has hated his name. Yet Lactantius dreads this coming disaster and urges his readers to entreat God to delay the coming of that destructive tyrant, apparently the Antichrist, who is to put out the eye of the world, the city of Rome, whose downfall will be speedily followed by the collapse of the present world.

When six thousand years of the world's existence are completed, the son of God will descend from heaven to execute judgment upon the wicked. He will raise the righteous dead and remain ten thousand years among men, ruling them in justice. The faithful who are alive at his coming shall not die, but shall continue alive throughout the millennium, producing an infinite number of holy offspring beloved by God. They who have been raised from the dead shall preside over the living as judges. The heathen will not be completely destroyed, but will be made to serve the righteous, who have been gathered from all the world into the sacred city which is situated in the middle of the earth. Here God himself dwells, ruling over the faithful. The moon will become as bright as the sun, and the brightness

of the latter will be increased seven fold. The earth will become miraculously fruitful, the mountains will drip with honey, wine and milk will flow like water, and perfect peace shall hold sway over all the earth. The heathen kings from distant parts shall bring gifts to God, the supreme king, "whose name shall be renowned and venerated by all the nations which shall be under heaven and by the kings which shall rule on the earth." At the close of the millennium God will enact the final judgment, when no nation save that of God only shall be left in the world. Then the heavens will be folded up, the earth renewed, men changed into the likeness of angels, and the wicked raised to receive everlasting punishment, burning "forever with perpetual fire in the sight of angels and the righteous."

Eastern Christendom produced an early fourth-century defender of millenarianism in the person of Methodius,[1] bishop of Olympus in Lycia. The day of judgment and the first resurrection are to be followed by a period of one thousand years in the company of Christ, but Methodius is not specific as to the locality. After the millennium the body of the righteous

[1] *Banquet of the Ten Virgins* IX. 5.

is to be changed from a corruptible and human form into one of angelic size and beauty. Thereupon it will be transported "into the very house of God above the heavens."

II

Hostility toward millenarianism, especially in its more realistic forms, emerged at a relatively early date. Apparently explicit objections first crystallized in gnostic Christian circles. Since the Gnostics regarded matter as wholly evil, they rejected belief in the resurrection and the establishment of a new régime by Christ upon earth. Their supreme quest was the complete deliverance of the soul from the realm of matter. To assume that the soul must return to the body, even for participation in the privileges of the millennial kingdom, was virtually a denial of the gnostic idea of salvation. On the contrary, at death the soul of the righteous was thought to pass at once to its heavenly rewards, hence all millennial imagery was rejected outright. Probably it was gnostic skepticism that called forth II Peter's reaffirmation of belief in the catastrophic end, and one of the strong incentives for Irenaeus' insistence upon millenarianism

was his desire to offset the skepticism of the Gnostics.

Other Christians, who cannot be charged with gnostic leanings, also rejected millenarianism. The resurrection was not generally denied, nor was any doubt necessarily cast upon the return of Christ to execute judgment, but the idea of a future millennial reign upon earth rapidly lost favor, and was ultimately declared to be heresy. Nor was the end of the present world awaited with the same degree of expectancy that characterized the Christian hopes of earlier times. This decline of millennial expectations was a natural result of Christianity's success in making conquest of its contemporary world. While the new movement was largely dominated by its Jewish inheritances and while its prospects of triumph over heathen foes seemed dark, the speedy end of the world and the establishment of Christ's millennial reign upon earth were vital factors in the Christian faith. But as Jewish ways of thinking were gradually supplanted or overlaid by Graeco-Roman notions, and as the new religion slowly rose to a position of supremacy in the Mediterranean world, millennial imagery lost its vital significance. In its less sensuous forms it often

survived unquestioned, perpetuating itself merely by virtue of its former momentum. But occasionally it was either definitely opposed or else so thoroughly recast as to be hardly recognizable.

Origen, an eastern Christian who flourished during the first half of the third century, was one of the earliest and severest critics of millenarianism. Its literalism was condemned by him in a classic passage:

> Certain persons then refusing the labor of thinking, and adopting a superficial view of the letter of the law, and yielding rather in some measure to the indulgence of their own desires and lusts, being disciples of the letter alone, are of opinion that the fulfilment of the promises of the future are to be looked for in bodily pleasure and luxury; and therefore they especially desire to have again after the resurrection such bodily structures as may never be without the power of eating and drinking and performing all the functions of flesh and blood, not following the opinion of the apostle Paul regarding the resurrection of a spiritual body. And consequently they say that after the resurrection there will be marriages and the begetting of children, imagining to themselves that the earthly city of Jerusalem is to be rebuilt, its foundations laid in precious stones, and its walls constructed of jasper, and its battlements of crystal; that it is to have a wall composed of many precious stones, as jasper, and sapphire, and chal-

cedony, and emerald, and sardonyx, and onyx, and chrysolite, and chrysoprase, and jacinth, and amethyst. Moreover, they think that the natives of other countries are to be given them as the ministers of their pleasures, whom they are to employ either as tillers of the field or builders of walls, and by whom their ruined and fallen city is again to be raised up; and they think that they are to receive the wealth of the nations to live on, and that they will have control over their riches; that even the camels of Midian and Kedar will come and bring to them gold and incense and precious stones. And these views they think to establish on the authority of the prophets by those promises which are written regarding Jerusalem and by those passages also where it is said that they who serve the Lord shall eat and drink, but that sinners shall hunger and thirst, that the righteous shall be joyful, but that sorrow shall possess the wicked. And from the New Testament also they quote the saying of the Savior in which he makes a promise to his disciples concerning the joy of wine, saying, "Henceforth I shall not drink of this cup until I drink it with you new in my Father's kingdom." They add moreover that declaration in which the Savior calls those blessed who now hunger and thirst, promising them that they shall be satisfied; and many other scriptural illustrations are adduced by them, the meaning of which they do not perceive is to be taken figuratively. Then, again, agreeably to the form of things in this life, and according to the gradations of the dignities or ranks in this world, or the greatness of their powers, they think they are to be kings and princes, like those earthly monarchs who now exist,

chiefly, as it appears, on account of that expression in the gospel, "Have thou power over five cities." And to speak shortly, according to the manner of things in this life in all similar matters do they desire the fulfilment of all things looked for in the promises, viz., that what now is should exist again. Such are the views of those who, while believing in Christ, understand the divine Scriptures in a sort of Jewish sense, drawing from them nothing worthy of the divine promises.[1]

Origen's solution of the problem was to treat the millennial imagery of the Bible figuratively rather than literally, a method far less true to Scripture than to the demands of Origen's own situation. In reality he believed the world to be eternal. He could not accept the notion of a literal physical resurrection, nor could he entertain the idea of a final judgment day with its attendant phenomena as pictured in popular faith. Yet he did not reject the biblical language upon which this faith commonly rested. Instead of criticizing the Scriptures, he rejected the literalist's interpretation of Scripture, and thereby escaped what he regarded as the utter absurdities of millenarianism. Origen could say that the present world will come to an end, but in what manner? Behind all the

[1] *De Prin.* II. 11:2.

catastrophic imagery of Scripture he found a "spiritual" meaning which seemed to him to be fully substantiated by other Scripture and clearly to indicate that the change from the old order to the new was to be a gradual process effected through the religious development of individuals and humanity. To use his own language, since

> different movements of rational beings and their varying opinions have brought about the diversity that is in the world . . . . there is no doubt that its end must be sought amid much diversity and variety, which variety, being found to exist in the termination of the world, will again furnish ground and occasion for the diversity of the other world which is to succeed the present. . . . . Accordingly we are to suppose that at the consummation and restoration of all things those who make a gradual advance and who ascend [in the scale of improvement] will arrive in due measure and order at that land and at that training which is contained in it where they may be prepared for those better institutions to which no addition can be made. For after his agents and his servants the Lord Christ who is king of all will himself assume the kingdom, that is, after instruction in the holy virtues he will himself instruct those who are capable of receiving him in respect of his being wisdom, reigning in them until he has subjected them to the Father who has subdued all things to himself. . . . . Then accordingly as a necessary consequence bodily nature will obtain

that highest condition to which nothing more can be added.[1]

By this allegorical method of interpretation Origen not only spiritualized the whole range of earlier millennial hopes, but set an example which has been widely followed by critics of millenarianism even down to the present day.

Dionysius of Alexandria,[2] a pupil of Origen, employed a somewhat different method of attack. His polemic was called forth by the work of a certain Egyptian bishop named Nepos, who had composed a treatise entitled *Refutation of Allegorists*. In opposition to the method employed by Origen, Nepos advocated a literal interpretation, and he had secured a large following among the Egyptian churches. But, as the result of a three-day conference held in Arsinoe, Dionysius persuaded the presbyters and teachers of the village churches to abandon their crude fancies. Subsequently, in writing of the affair, Dionysius raises doubts about the authority of the Book of Revelation. He knows some Christians who reject it entirely, pronouncing it without sense or argument, and maintaining that it is a fraudulent work composed by the heretic Cerinthus. Dionysius'

[1] *De Prin.* II. 1:3; III. 6:9. [2] Eusebius, *Hist.* VII. 24 f.

own attitude is less radical. He is certain that the book is not to be taken literally, but assumes that it may have a hidden meaning too deep for him to grasp. He generously remarks, "I do not reject what I cannot comprehend, but rather wonder because I do not understand it." Yet for all practical purposes he may as well have rejected it, since he refused to expound the views it contained. Although not dismissing the book as a forgery, he did maintain that the author was not John the Apostle but some other Christian of that name.

During the fourth century Christianity made such rapid progress that it became the legal religion of the Roman Empire, thus making it possible for Augustine in the first quarter of the fifth century to write his famous treatise describing the church as the city of God on earth. The millennium was now no longer a desideratum; it was already a realization.[1] Working from this point of view, Augustine lays the ghost of millenarianism so effectively that for centuries thereafter the subject is practically ignored.

Augustine employs the allegorical method of interpretation, but applies it in a new way

[1] *City of God* XX.

appropriate to the new conditions of his own time. He affirms his belief in a final judgment, when the dead will be raised in incorruptible form and the present world completely transformed, but this event is not pictured as imminent. On the other hand, the millennial imagery of the Book of Revelation is thoroughly spiritualized. There is to be no specific second advent of Christ before the day of final judgment, for his coming "continually occurs in his church, that is, in his members, in which he comes little by little and piece by piece since the whole church is his body." Similarly the first resurrection mentioned in Rev. 20:5 f., as occurring at the beginning of the millennium, is understood figuratively. This resurrection is a present realization for believers, and is identical with the change in their status before God as they die to sin and rise to new life in the church.

As for the one-thousand-year reign of Christ upon earth, Augustine asserts that it began with the career of the earthly Jesus, who bound the strong man, Satan (Mark 3:27). Ever since that time Satan has been confined to the abyss, in order that he may not seduce the nations from which the church is gathered, and over whom he held sway before Jesus appeared.

But the "abyss" for Augustine is not a chaotic pit in the regions beneath the earth, but "the countless multitude of the wicked, whose hearts are unfathomably deep in malignity against the church of God." Thus Satan's kingdom is no longer the Roman government, which is now formally Christian, but the group of scoffing heathen individuals who continue their hostility toward the church. While the devil is thus bound the saints reign with Christ a thousand years, even as the author of Revelation affirms. It is the present church that is the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of heaven, wherein the saints reign both while living and after their decease. This militant spiritual régime is to grow more prosperous with the passing of the years "until we come to that most peaceful kingdom in which we shall reign without an enemy, and it is of this first resurrection in the present life that the Revelation speaks."

Although the present world is not to grow worse, but constantly better, as the end approaches, yet Augustine accepts the statement in Revelation that the devil is to be loosed from the abyss for a short time before the end of the thousand years. But this loosing is interpreted to mean that the enemies of the

church will be especially active in their opposition for three and one-half years before the inauguration of the final judgment. However, these special activities of the devil are doomed to failure. During this short period he may prevent any more persons from adopting Christianity and he may cause a few to fall away, but such will be no loss to the church, for "these do not belong to the predestined number of the sons of God." The true church will stand firm and pass gloriously through this period of attack. Augustine disposes of the beast mentioned in Revelation by identifying it with "the community of unbelievers set in opposition to the faithful people and the city of God." And his image is that false show of piety which certain people make who pretend to be Christians, but are not so at heart. Thus to the beast belong, not only the avowed enemies of the church, but also those members of the community who are as tares among the wheat.

On the final day of judgment the wicked will be consigned to eternal fire, the nature and location of which are unknown "unless perhaps the divine spirit reveal it to someone." Then the world will be transmuted, but not com-

pletely destroyed, by a universal conflagration, in which "the qualities of the corruptible elements which suited our corruptible bodies shall utterly perish and our substance shall receive such qualities as shall by a wonderful transmutation harmonize with our immortal bodies so that as the world itself is renewed to some better thing, it is fitly accommodated to men themselves renewed in their flesh to some better thing." Thus is established the new Jerusalem, which may be said to come down out of heaven "because the grace with which God formed it is of heaven." Such was the marvelous transformation effected by Augustine as he recast the vivid millennial imagery of the Book of Revelation to suit conditions in the early fifth century.

III

As the year 1000 A.D. drew near, hopes for a speedy end of the world revived. Following the program of Augustine it was now time to expect that consummation of perfection toward which the church was supposed to be gradually approaching. In Western Christendom this impending event was proclaimed by various preachers, but the views of these enthusiasts

were discountenanced by the more responsible leaders of the church. As the position of organized Christianity became constantly stronger, the desire for the inauguration of a new order lost its vitality. Traditional millennial formulas and cognate notions were perpetuated, but in general throughout the Middle Ages Christians were content with the triumph of the church in the present world and the hope of a blessed immortality for the individual soul after death.

After Augustine the most important developments in the millennial type of thinking related to the more complete spiritualization of the church as the present kingdom of God on earth. The Augustinian scheme presupposed that the church would gradually arrive at perfection, but in later times certain observers became skeptical regarding the progress of the contemporary ecclesiastical organization. It was believed that the end of the world would not come until the church experienced a rebirth through the return of the Holy Spirit and the restoration of primitive apostolic conditions, from which Christianity was thought to have departed in the course of its history.

The first noted advocate of this new type of hope is Joachim of Floris, an Italian monk of the last half of the twelfth century. Three formative factors are observable in the making of his system of interpretation. In the first place he was an ardent admirer of the monastic life in its stricter forms; consequently his future church was to be an idealized monastic order. He was also inclined toward ecstasy and was fond of meditating upon the supposed hidden schemes of God in history. Thirdly, he applied his mystical temperament to the interpretation of the Bible, and particularly to its prophetic elements, as a means of determining the future course of events. The outcome of Joachim's reflections was a new division of human history into three epochs. First, there was the age of law, or the age of the Father, when the supreme demand upon men was obedience. The appearance of John the Baptist marked the transition to the second age, which is that of the gospel, or of the Son. This is the age to which the present earthly church belongs, when men are striving toward the attainment of mystical knowledge. The third age, which is that of the Spirit and of the truly spiritual church, has not yet dawned. The date for the

end of the present order and the inauguration of the age of the Spirit was fixed at the year 1260, the years during which the true church had remained hidden being equal to the days that the woman mentioned in Rev. 12:1–6 remained in the wilderness. When the new era arrived the present church would not be abolished, but marvelously purified and restored to its primitive simplicity. The elect would be assembled from the west and from the east, both Jews and Gentiles being converted. After a final conflict with the powers of evil, to be followed by the final judgment, a new order would be inaugurated. This new society was to be organized after the model of a great monastery in which monks as the truly spiritual men would displace the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and humanity would enter upon its final Sabbath day of peace and purity.

Although Joachim's views were espoused and perpetuated by the more rigorous Franciscans, they left no very permanent impression upon Catholicism. His fundamental incentives —dissatisfaction with the established ecclesiastical order, the pursuit of mysticism, and the study of apocalyptic prophecy—found more fruitful soil in Protestant circles. The stirring

events connected with the Reformation and the sufferings endured by Protestants in the early days of their history all contributed to produce a conviction in many quarters that the last days had come. The pope now seemed to be the very Antichrist incarnate, the true church must be as yet invisible, and the Book of Revelation could easily be treated as a compendium of church history portraying in the most minute detail the career of the kingdom of God. In the agitation of the times, when the reformed faith was reaping its first harvest of martyrs, pious fancy easily detected thousands of marvelous occurrences in the heavens or upon the earth. Nor were wonderful visions, dreams, and apparitions lacking, all of which seemed to portend the near end of the world. This period of political, social, and religious upheaval supplied a host of new stimuli for the revival of millennial hopes.

In the latter part of the fourteenth century Militz of Kromeriz, a forerunner of John Huss, protested against the corruption of the times and sought in Scripture a solution of the world's ills. As a result of his study Militz became convinced that all references to Antichrist pointed toward present conditions and that the

end of the world was to occur some time between the years 1365 and 1367. Huss himself did not lay stress upon the imminent end, but he often spoke of Antichrist as a present evil power lying in wait to devour the faithful. During the period of the Hussite wars (1415–36), which followed the treacherous arrest and violent death of Huss, the Bohemian people had ample incentives for suspecting that the old order of existence was on the verge of collapse.

At this time among the Bohemians millennial hopes were revived with peculiar strength by the so-called Taborites. Their zeal and courage were stimulated by leaders who painted glowing colors of the present evil days of final tribulation, when the wrath of God was being filled up in preparation for judgment. Signs of the approaching end were seen on every hand. Rumors of war were everywhere; nation was rising up against nation and kingdom against kingdom; false prophets were abroad in the land; even within their own circles traitors to their own cause had been discovered; and other terrible phenomena to precede the coming of the Son of Man were a part of their daily experience. The day of judgment when the sinful earth would be smitten with the fire of divine

wrath was believed to be so near that five cities of Bohemia were selected as centers of refuge to be spared in the day of world-conflagration because they had not yielded to the Antichrist. Thither the villagers and peasants assembled from all parts of the country, selling their property and placing the proceeds in the hands of their religious leaders as had been done by the first Christians. Thus the movement developed into a communistic society.

The restoration of peace was quickly followed by a decline in the Taborites' fanatical zeal, but in a milder form similar millennial notions survived in the sect known as the Bohemian Brethren. Their preachers on occasion identified the pope at Rome with the Antichrist and proclaimed the nearness of the second advent. These ideas were revived again in the period of stress known as the Thirty Years' War, when Bohemia suffered so tragically. The experiences of these years, and his own natural bent toward mysticism, led the famous Comenius to expect a miraculous transformation of the church and the speedy return of Christ.

The reformers in Switzerland and Germany also saw in the Roman church a hostile power of

evil as real and terrible to them as the Roman state had been to Christians at the time the Book of Revelation was written. A crude form of millenarianism emerged early in the sixteenth century among the more fanatically inclined adherents of the Anabaptist movement. The revolt against feudal oppression, which came to a head in the Peasants' War of 1525, was accompanied in certain religious circles by a desire to set aside all ecclesiastical authorities and to establish an ideal Christian commonwealth of a communistic type. Although the peasants' revolt was crushed, the new religious interest continued and soon a community was formed at Strassburg, under the leadership of Melchior Hoffmann, who declared himself to be one of the two witnesses mentioned in Rev. 11:3 and announced that Strassburg was to be the site of the New Jerusalem. Owing to opposition the movement was transferred to Münster, where the fanatics took full possession of the city, established their own form of government under the alleged direction of the Spirit, and founded the new Zion in anticipation of the speedy return of Christ. The leaders claimed the authority of visions from heaven, and Münster became the scene of unrestrained

fanaticism until the movement was forcibly suppressed in 1535.

The millenarianism of both the Lutheran and the Reformed churches was usually of a more restrained type. The downfall of the Antichrist papacy and the near approach of the end of the world were often anticipated, although the idea of a literal millennial reign of Christ upon earth was not generally approved. But through the aid of mysticism and pietism millennial teachings found several advocates within the Protestant churches, particularly in the seventeenth century. These were times of much unrest occasioned by religious wars in Germany, by the persecution of the Huguenots in France, and by the political revolution of Cromwell in England. Such stirring events brought the problem of the world's ills close to the hearts of the populace and called forth new expressions of millennial hope.

During the seventeenth century in Germany and France millennial views were represented by individuals rather than by definite movements. Writing in 1627, the German scholar Alsted fixed the date for the inauguration of the millennium at 1694. In France a generation later the Protestant theologian Jurieu, incited

by the persecution of the Huguenots, fixed upon the year 1689 for the downfall of the Antichrist Roman church.

In England by the year 1653 millennial teaching had crystallized into a definite political propaganda known as the Fifth Monarchy Movement, bitterly antagonistic to Cromwell. Its advocates professed allegiance to King Jesus only, affirming that he was about to appear and establish a fifth world-monarchy. The four previous monarchies were reckoned as the Assyrian, the Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman, the last-named still existing in the form of the Roman church. The champions of these views believed that duty called them to fight for King Jesus, thereby demonstrating their fitness to receive him at his coming. Heretofore they had been praying and preaching, but now they believed that the time had come to act for God. This conviction expressed itself in two unsuccessful attempts at insurrection, one in 1657 and the other in 1661.

The motive of the Fifth Monarchy Movement was not only hatred for Rome, but also a strong leaning toward communistic ideals and mystical experiences. One quotation from their official declaration reads:

We freely give up our lives and estates unto our Lord King Jesus and to his people, to become soldiers of the Lamb's army, abhorring mercenary principles and interests. And for this work's sake we desire not to love our lives unto the death, neither will we ever (if we may speak so great a word with reverence in the fear of God) sheath our swords again until Mount Zion becomes the joy of the whole earth.[1]

One of the prophetesses of the movement stresses mystical knowledge as a peculiar source of millennial wisdom, in contrast with the information to be derived from careful study. While in a state of trance she enjoins her companions thus:

Thou shalt read the visions John had,
Not after the learned doctor's way;
But thou shalt read them in plainness,
And clear light in thy day.
Thou shalt not read what's spoke of Dragon
and Beast
With university art;
But thou shalt read with kings seven eyes
And an enlightened heart.
Thou shalt not run to antichrist's libraries,
To fetch from thence any skill
To read the Revelation of Christ,
But be with knowledge fill'd.[2]

[1] Cited by Champlin Burrage in the *English Historical Review*, XXV (1910), 722–47.

[2] *Ibid.*, XXVI (1911), 526–35.

The communistic motive appears again in the so-called Ronsdorf sect, founded in 1726 at Elberfeld in Germany, but later removed to Ronsdorf. For a quarter of a century this movement prospered, receiving support, not only from Germany, but also from Switzerland, Holland, and England. The movement also had its mystical side. A girl who was early converted to the new teaching experienced ecstasies in which she received alleged revelations from heaven, disclosing the glories of the new kingdom whose advent was at first predicted for the year 1730. Later this girl became the wife of the founder of the movement, Elias Eller, who now declared that he and his wife were of the tribe of Judah and were chosen to establish the New Jerusalem. She was said to be the mother of Zion and the woman clothed with the sun (Rev. 12:1). Also she and her husband were identified with the two witnesses referred to in Rev. 11:3. Encouraged by success, the founder soon affirmed that he was virtually the author of the new order. He now taught that the fulness of Godhead dwelt in himself, and that his divinely inspired wife was the medium of a new revelation. Deceased saints were presently to appear

upon earth again as members of the new community, and the savior of the world was to be born in the person of one of Eller's children. This strange movement prospered for nearly a quarter of a century, sending out missionaries to different countries, but it declined rapidly after the death of its founder in 1750.

About the same time millenarianism received a new impetus in the world of scholarship through a commentary on the Book of Revelation issued by the German theologian J. A. Bengel in the year 1740. His motive was historical and scriptural, in contrast with the communistic and mystical interests which had previously wielded so strong an influence in the perpetuation of millennial hopes. Bengel's principle of interpretation was to ascertain the plain meaning of the Book of Revelation, rejecting the allegorizing and spiritualizing method of exposition which had been in vogue among scholars since the time of Origen. Having determined that the literal interpretation of the book was clearly millenarian, Bengel adopted this view as authoritative for his own thinking and fixed upon the year 1836 for the inauguration of the millennium. His work is especially significant because it gave new

stimulus to a distinctly academic tendency which constructs millennial speculations from biblical texts, and justifies them by affirming the verbal inspiration of Scripture.

During the last quarter of the eighteenth century the mystical and communistic motives emerged again, this time in England, resulting in the establishment of the Shaker movement. A certain Ann Lee believed herself to be the inspired medium of divinely revealed teachings regarding the holy estate of celibacy. Having met resistance in England, instructed by revelations, she came to America in 1774 where various Shaker settlements were formed. These societies were communistic in type, the men and women living in separate groups. The last days were believed to be at hand. The history of the world was divided into four cycles, the first extending to the flood, the second covering the period from the flood to the appearing of Jesus, the third continuing down to the time of Ann Lee, and the fourth embracing the present, which is to issue in the establishment of the new age. The first step in the process of restoration is the organization of the Shaker church, reproducing the primitive purity of pentecostal times and marking

the beginning of Christ's new kingdom upon earth.

The French Revolution, which shook all Western Europe to its foundations, aroused new interest in millennial speculation. Mystical revelations, combined with fanciful interpretations of political happenings, were thought to furnish clear evidences of the near end of the world. In Germany, for example, Schönherr, a theosophist of Königsberg, declared that the coming of Christ was imminent. Napoleon was identified with the Antichrist of Scripture, and Königsberg with its seven hills was believed to be the city whose doom had been predicted in Rev. 17:9 ff. A generation after Schönherr, who died in 1826, another instance of revived millennialism appeared in a socialistic movement organized by Christoph Hoffmann. He proposed to rebuild the Jerusalem temple in preparation for the return of Christ. Although unable to carry out this intention, he did succeed in assembling followers who constituted themselves into a distinct "people of God." But millennial teaching in Germany during the nineteenth century found its chief supporters, not in separatist sects, but within the regular Protestant churches. Holding to the notion

of a verbally inspired Scripture, interpreters followed the lines laid down by Bengel, supplementing scriptural exegesis by mystical leanings or by reference to various signs of the times which were taken to foreshadow the speedy return of Christ.

In the British Isles the nineteenth century produced two noteworthy millennial sects known as the Catholic Apostolic church (or the Irvingites) and the Plymouth Brethren (or Darbyites). In the year 1823 Edward Irving, a Scotch Presbyterian who had gained popularity as a preacher in London, published a book embodying his views regarding the coming judgment. The book made a strong impression upon a rich banker, Henry Drummond, who lived at Albury, southwest of London. Beginning in 1826, he held a series of yearly conferences at his home, where laymen and clergymen sympathetic with the movement gathered to study prophecy. In the meantime Irving became more ardent in his advocacy of millennial teaching, going so far as to fix upon the year 1864 as the date for Christ's return.

The exposition of prophecy had been the dominant interest of the group which met regularly at Drummond's home. In 1830 a

mystical note was added. It was reported that the power of uttering supernatural communications had recently been exhibited among the members of a certain Presbyterian family living near Glasgow. Drummond sent investigators to visit the family, and soon after a report of the genuineness of these utterances had been received similar powers were displayed by certain members of Irving's church in London. These new prophets, speaking in the Spirit, frequently exclaimed, "Behold the bridegroom cometh. Go ye out to meet him," or "The body of Christ." These utterances were taken by the credulous to be clear evidences that the advent of Christ was near.

At first Irving, the dominant figure in the new movement, regarded himself as the angel of the new church. But his leadership was soon supplanted by that of the Spirit working through the new prophets. At this point the familiar millennial notion of a new spiritual church, prepared to receive Christ at his coming, was given prominence. In the belief that this preparation could be effected only through the Spirit working in the ministries and ordinances of the church, an effort was made to restore the form of ecclesiastical government current in

apostolic times. Accordingly modern apostles were selected to lead the movement, the selection being made to depend entirely upon the will of the Spirit speaking through the modern ecstatic prophets. This restored spiritual apostolic church also instituted a missionary propaganda aiming to assemble from various countries a body of true saints prepared to greet Christ at his coming.

The Plymouth Brethren is a kindred movement also aiming to restore the purity of the primitive church in preparation for the early return of Christ. Between 1827 and 1831 in Ireland at Dublin, and in England at Plymouth, representatives of this type of teaching were active, and distinct assemblies were formed. A protest was raised against ministerial ordination and all formal ecclesiastical procedure. The ideal assembly was to be found where two or three were gathered together in Jesus' name with him in their midst. In addition to this interest in restoring the primitive Christian society, interpretation of apocalyptic prophecy also played an important rôle. The imagery of Daniel and Revelation was worked up into an elaborate program of events to occur in connection with the early re-

turn of Christ and the establishment of the millennium.

At about the same time new millennial movements emerged in America. The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints, more familiarly known as the Mormons, originated in 1830 at Fayette, in the state of New York. Back of the movement lay both mystical and communistic motives, as well as a desire to restore the church to its primitive simplicity. Tradition represents the founder, Joseph Smith, as a mystic, who received unique divine revelations guiding him in the establishment of a new church and in the preparation of a new sacred scripture, the Book of Mormon. This scripture was supposed to reproduce the word of God previously revealed to the ancient inhabitants of America. Smith's aim was to found a new community on the present earth, a present city of Zion, where Christ on his return would set up his millennial kingdom. After various unfortunate attempts this new sect finally established itself at Salt Lake City to await the advent of Christ. In the meantime the spiritual gifts of ancient times were to be restored in the form of tongues, prophecies, visions, revelations, healings, and other phenomena of

mystical experience credited to the renewed activity of the Holy Spirit, which was supposed to have forsaken the historical church.

Another form of millennial propaganda was begun in 1831 by William Miller, of Low Hampton, New York. He was the founder of the Adventists (or Millerites), of whom there are at present several different branches. From a study of scriptural texts Miller concluded that Christ was to return in person to establish the millennium. The date for this event was first fixed at 1843, and then it was moved down to October 22, 1844. Subsequently greater reserve was practiced in fixing a specific date, but faith in the early advent of Christ did not waver.

In more recent times millennial hopes have been most vigorously advocated by individuals within various Christian communities rather than by different separatist sects. The propaganda has also been mainly a didactic and exegetical one, although mystical tendencies have not been lacking. One of the cornerstones of this teaching is rigid maintenance of the dogma of verbal inspiration and the alleged superior insight of the "spiritual man" into the secrets of the Scripture. Historical investigation of the circumstances under which a biblical

book arose and familiarity with the immediate problems or experiences of the author and his first readers are not regarded as an essential preparation for the interpretation of Scripture. In fact such studies are thought to constitute a real barrier to the true understanding of the Bible. By simply reading his own subjectivism into Scripture, the man who believes himself spiritually enlightened follows the advice of the Fifth Monarchy prophetess, employing no "university art" to read what is spoken of dragon or beast, nor does he "run to anti-christ's libraries" for wisdom to interpret the revelation of Christ. His own inner light is quite sufficient for the task.

A vigorous, modern millenarian propaganda was conducted for several years by the late Charles T. Russell, of "millennial dawn" fame. In the year 1886 he began a series of volumes advocating millennial views by a familiar process of fanciful scriptural interpretation. In *Thy Kingdom Come*, published in 1891, the millennium was said to have been invisibly inaugurated in the year 1874 and the end of the present world was prophesied for the year 1914. The movement, though chiefly inspired by one man, has produced an abundant literature

which has been distributed diligently throughout different parts of the world.

A more influential group of modern millenarians carry on their teaching, not as a separate body, but as members of any denomination with which they may chance to be connected. Although their efforts are often persistent and carefully planned, there is no disposition on their part to organize an independent society. Yet a distinct movement has been in evidence especially since 1878, when adherents of these opinions assembled from various denominations to attend a "Prophetic Conference" held in New York. Those who signed the call for the conference represented ten different communions—Presbyterian, United Presbyterian, Baptist, Episcopalian, Reformed Episcopalian, Congregationalist, Methodist, Adventist, Dutch Reformed, and Lutheran. Disciples of the movement regard themselves as the "true church" within every church, whatever their denominational connections may be; and the leading advocates of this teaching, when using any distinctive self-designation, style themselves "Evangelists." Their preaching professes to be an accurate and literal interpretation of biblical prophecy, though this interest is often

supplemented by strongly mystical tendencies. It is assumed that the entire Bible was written with specific reference to present-day issues and with little or no reference to ancient conditions prevalent when the various authors of these books lived and worked. As compared with ancient millenarian types of scriptural exposition, the new features of the modern propaganda consist chiefly of references to recent events in history, the foreshadowings of which are ingeniously discovered in biblical prophecy. The world-war which began in 1914 has given new opportunity for the advocacy of these views, nor have their adherents been slow to avail themselves of this advantage. Affirming that they are able to discover new fulfilments of prophecy in the stirring events of these times, they insist anew that the betterment of present conditions can be effected only through a sudden destruction of the present order to be followed by the inauguration of Christ's millennial reign upon earth.

CHAPTER V

MODERN ESTIMATE OF MILLENNIAL HOPES

History shows many variations in the millennial type of hope. While Gentiles, Jews, and Christians alike looked for a final release from present evils through some unique form of world-renewal, widely varying programs were proposed for the attainment of this end. Nor was there a single program for Gentiles, or for Jews, or for Christians.

This diversity was a natural outcome of the varying circumstances under which millennial speculations arose and developed. They represent the work of different persons with a variety of tastes, living in different surroundings throughout a long period of years. Diversities are especially noticeable among both Jews and Christians. The changes in Hebrew hopes kept pace with changing experiences in the national life, and variations in Christian expectations are closely linked up with the enlarging experiences of the Christians as the new religion spread from Palestine into distant lands. At one time millennialists have been interested in

politics, at another time their interests have been social or communistic, some have had a fondness for mysticism, and others have delighted in the fanciful interpretation of prophecy. In each case millennial hopes reflect the special interests of their several advocates.

The fact of variety in millennial speculations greatly increased their functional possibilities. During the course of their history they answered to a wide range of human needs. While always concerned with the main problem of eliminating evil, the particular forms of evil to be abolished were conceived of in various ways. At times millennial imagery seemed to hold out a sure way of escape from the oppression of social ills. Other exponents of this faith stressed the hope of liberation from bodily sufferings due to poverty, sickness, or death. Frequently this type of hope was a strong support in the hour of severe political misfortune or religious persecution. In less strenuous times it served as a vehicle of fancy, enabling the native curiosity of the human mind to construct for itself marvelous pictures of the unknown future. Taken in the large, the millennial type of hope functioned variously at many periods in the past by sustaining man's faith in the triumph of

righteousness and providing a mighty hypothetical instrument for the ultimate elimination of evil.

Are millennial expectations capable of functioning efficiently in the modern world with its new problems and its new knowledge? At present this is a question of unusual importance. Today a fresh realization of life's ills has been thrust upon us by the frightful disaster of a world-war. In this moment of sore affliction, when all the skill and energy of humanity seem wholly diverted into channels of destruction, it is perfectly natural for many persons to follow the example of the past and seek to ward off the recurrence of such a calamity by predicting a speedy end of the present world and the miraculous inauguration of a new age when men shall no more learn war. But serviceable as this type of hope may have been to cheer the afflicted in days gone by, its efficacy in the present situation is open to serious question. Can men today continue with confidence to expect a cataclysmic reversal of present conditions, or does the light of experience and present knowledge demand the adoption of a more constructive, though less spectacular, program for the renovation of the world?

I

Some of the programs offered by present-day millennialists for the solution of the modern world's ills have been worked out in great detail. This is more particularly true of the premillennialists than of the postmillennialists. The latter do not look for early relief through the sudden coming of Christ. On the contrary, they expect a gradual and increasing success of Christianity in the present world until ideal conditions are finally realized. Then will follow the millennium. At its close a brief period of apostasy will set in, when Christians will engage in fierce conflict with evil powers which have been liberated for a short time before their ultimate destruction. After the brief period of final tribulation is past, Christ will come in glory, a general resurrection will occur, judgment will be enacted, the old world will be destroyed by fire, the wicked will be consigned to torment, and the righteous will enter upon an eternal life of bliss.

The premillennialists, on the other hand, expect a much earlier return of Christ, and deny all possibility of a gradual process of betterment as the millennium approaches. The details of their program in the form most widely

current at present are as follows. The present world is rapidly growing worse as the catastrophic end approaches. In the meantime the function of the church is to prepare a group of saints for membership in the new kingdom of Christ later to be revealed. But not all members of the visible church are to be saved. The true church is the mystical body of Christ, a select company within Christendom. The task of the church in the present world is to be a witness especially to the doctrine of Christ's return. When this work of witnessing is completed, or at an earlier date if God so decrees, the true church will be removed from the world. God alone knows precisely when this change will take place, but premillennialists find ample evidence in the Scripture and in the contemporary world to convince them that the end is imminent. It may occur today or tomorrow, and it certainly will occur very shortly.

When Christ returns he does not immediately descend to the earth, but tarries in the upper air. Here he is met by his bride, the church, snatched up from the earth like Enoch of old. This privilege will be bestowed upon true Christians, who are the church within the

church, the wheat among the chaff. This aërial assembly will include the righteous dead restored to life, living believers who have been suddenly transformed for the occasion, and Old Testament worthies. Except for missing their translated friends, those who remain upon earth may be wholly unaware that anything phenomenal has occurred. For a time the returned heavenly bridegroom and his glorified church bride remain suspended in the air enjoying their honeymoon, while evil conditions upon earth rapidly reach a climax. This translation of the saints is technically known as the "rapture."

Now that the saints have been removed from the earth, God permits the terrible tribulation of the last times to descend upon mortals. The Jews return to Palestine, where some of their number are converted to faith in Christ, and thus for them "at evening time it shall be light." The Antichrist appears, filling the earth with his depredations. A sufficient time must elapse for all forms of prophesied tribulation to be accomplished before the day of the Lord comes. The exact length of the interim is not known, though it will be a relatively short season. It will not be less than seven years, and

probably it will be somewhat longer. Wickedness will be rampant, and indescribable agonies will afflict the earth. The time, however, is to be shortened for the sake of those elect Jews who shall be converted, although even they are destined to be slain by Antichrist. In the meantime Christ and the saints rapturously await the moment when they are to descend visibly to earth.

At last Christ and his companions are revealed in the midst of flaming fire, descending to execute judgment upon sinners. Antichrist, who has exalted himself to the rulership of the earth, shall perish. His earthly capital, the restored Babylon, will be completely overthrown in all its wickedness. The hosts of evil will be destroyed, the beast and the false prophet will be apprehended, and they along with Satan will be consigned to the lower regions. Those persons who had accepted Christ during the period of the tribulation, and who have died before he finally descends to earth, will now be raised to join him and the saints in a glorious reign of one thousand years upon the purified earth.

As the millennium draws to a close, Satan will be loosed for a season. But his liberty is

soon at an end. He calls Gog and Magog to his assistance, with a mighty host as numerous as the sands of the sea, to fight against the saints who dwell in Jerusalem. These enemies of Christ are quickly devoured by heavenly fire, and Satan is cast into the burning pit, there to endure eternal torment. This event is followed by the resurrection of all the ungodly, who assemble before the great white throne to receive sentence from the judge of both living and dead. They are consigned to the fires of torment, whither they are followed by the wicked angels, who also receive condemnation at this time. With all the forces of evil thus finally assigned to fitting abodes of eternal punishment, the righteous enter upon a life of eternal blessedness.

Such is the program offered by premillennialists to the modern world as an ideal method of eliminating its ills. Can this program be accepted with confidence at the present time?

II

The scriptural test is often advanced as a guaranty of the validity of millenarianism. This is particularly true of the propaganda in its present form. May it not be said that

premillenarians truly reproduce biblical views and that they are therefore deserving of our full confidence?

Undoubtedly the ancient Hebrew prophets announced the advent of a terrible day of Jehovah when the old order of things would suddenly pass away. Later prophets foretold a day of restoration for the exiles when all nature would be miraculously changed and an ideal kingdom of David established. The seers of subsequent times portrayed the coming of a truly heavenly rule of God when the faithful would participate in millennial blessings. Early Christians expected soon to behold Christ returning upon the clouds even as they had seen him in their visions literally ascending into heaven. In times of persecution faith in the return of Christ shone with new luster, as afflicted believers confidently exclaimed, "Behold, he cometh with the clouds; and every eye shall see him, and the saints shall reign with him a thousand years."[1] So far as the use of this type of imagery is concerned, millenarianism may quite properly claim to be biblical. Unquestionably certain biblical writers expected a catastrophic end of the world. They depicted

[1] Rev. 1:7; 20:6.

the days of sore distress immediately to precede the final catastrophe, they proclaimed the visible return of the heavenly Christ, and they eagerly awaited the revelation of the New Jerusalem.

Any attempt to evade these literalistic features of biblical imagery is futile. Ever since Origen's day certain interpreters of Scripture have sought to refute millennial expectations by affirming that even the most striking statements about Jesus' return are to be understood figuratively. It has also been said that Daniel and Revelation are highly mystical and allegorical works not intended to refer to actual events, whether past, present, or future, but have a purely spiritual significance like that of Milton's *Paradise Lost* or Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. These are evasive devices designed to bring these Scriptures into harmony with present conditions, while ignoring the vivid expectancy of the ancients. The afflicted Jews of Maccabean times were demanding, not a figurative, but a literal, end of their troubles, nor did Daniel promise them anything less than the actual establishment of a new heavenly régime. In a similarly realistic vein an early Christian wrote, "You shall see the Son of man sitting at

the right hand of power and coming with the clouds of heaven," or again, "There are some here of them that stand by who shall in no wise taste of death till they see the kingdom of God come with power."[1] Imagine the shock to Mark had he been told that this expectation was already realized in the appearances of Jesus after the resurrection, or in the ecstatic experiences of the disciples at Pentecost, or in the salvation of the individual Christians at death. And who can imagine Mark's feelings had he also been told, in certain modern fashion, that his prediction of Christ's return was to be fulfilled in the Lutheran Reformation, in the French Revolution, in the Wesleyan Revival, in the emancipation of the slaves, in the spread of foreign missions, in the democratization of Russia, or in the outcome of the present world-war? Premillennialists are thoroughly justified in their protest against those opponents who allegorize or spiritualize pertinent biblical passages, thus retaining scriptural phrases while utterly perverting their original significance.

On the other hand, premillenarianism has its own way of perverting Scripture. To illustrate,

[1] Mark 14:62; 9:1.

Moses is declared to have been an explicit believer in the second advent of Christ. The proof-text cited as evidence of Moses' opinion is, "Jehovah came from Sinai and rose from Seir unto them; he shined forth from Mount Paran, and he came from the ten thousands of holy ones; at his right hand was a fiery law for them."[1] It would be difficult to find a verse in the Bible which both by context and content refers more specifically to that epoch-making moment in Hebrew tradition when Jehovah delivered the law to Moses. But scriptural context and content are completely ignored by premillennialists, who assume that every ancient worthy shared their own state of mind. Similarly the utterances of the prophets warning the Hebrews of ancient times to prepare for a speedy national disaster are transformed into predictions of a far-off event alleged to be imminent only now, nearly three thousand years after the times of the prophets. The fact that a prophet refers explicitly to the contemporary power of Assyria or Egypt as Jehovah's instrument of punishment is ignored, and the biblical phrases are straightway applied to imaginary events yet to transpire long after the

[1] Deut. 33:2.

kingdoms of Assyria and Egypt have ceased to exist.

Jewish thinking of post-exilic times is likewise divested of its distinctive content and transformed into a mere semblance of its original self. The prophetic expectation of a restored national life, when the Jews of the Dispersion were to return "from Assyria and from Egypt and from Pathros and from Cush and from Elam and from Hamath and from Shinar and from the coast lands,"[1] is made to refer to the movements of Jews in modern times from Europe and America back to Jerusalem. And the prophets' marvelous highway to be miraculously prepared by God for the passage of the returning exiles becomes the modern railway from Joppa to Jerusalem, while the engine drawing the train fulfils Nahum's reference to the chariots flashing with steel "in the day of his preparation."[2] Imagine, if you can, the post-exilic prophets urging their Jewish kinsmen of Assyria and Epypt to hold fast their faith in God, awaiting with assurance a coming deliverance to be initiated some twenty-five hundred years later by the use of a modern railroad from Joppa to Jerusalem. The true premillennialist

[1] Isa. 11:11. [2] Nah. 2:3.

can perform this feat of fancy with the ease of a professional acrobat, at the same time solemnly affirming that he stands upon the solid rock of Scripture.

Since the language of Jewish apocalyptic is often designedly obscure, perversions of its meaning are not always so self-evident as in the case of the prophets. Yet such perversions are even more abundant in the premillennialists' program. Texts from the Book of Daniel are employed without the slightest regard for the author's own immediate experiences and problems. His references to the sufferings endured by the Jews of the author's own day are quite ignored. Instead of writing primarily to strengthen the faith and courage of his fellow-sufferers, it is assumed that he was mainly interested in depicting a distant scene still awaiting realization after a lapse of more than two thousand years. The profanation of the sanctuary at Jerusalem, the discontinuance of the burnt offering, the abominable heathen image within the temple inclosure, and other phases of affliction distressing the pious soul of the author of Daniel become fanciful future happenings belonging to an imaginary period of tribulation to precede the anticipated catastrophic

end of the present world. It avails nothing with the premillenarian that the writer of Daniel sought to cheer his contemporaries by assigning a limit of less than four years for the continuance of their sufferings. This promise of speedy relief, like the references to distress, is violently torn from history and transplanted into the realm of premillennial fancy.

New Testament writers receive similar treatment. It is tacitly assumed that all of them had their eyes riveted upon the same phantasmagorical display that entrances the imagination of the premillennialist. The earliest Christians' own immediate experiences and problems are not thought to have any important bearing upon the meaning of their words.

The fallacy of this procedure may be illustrated by a few examples. Manifestly Mark is referring to the destruction of the Jewish temple of Jesus' own day when he reports Jesus as saying, "There shall not be left here one stone upon another which shall not be thrown down." Thereupon the disciples press him with the question, "Tell us when shall these things be and what shall be the sign when these things are about to be accomplished?" Then follows a description of the tribulation leading up to this

anticipated disaster, which is regarded as part of the program of suffering immediately to precede the end of the world. The discourse closes with the solemn declaration that the generation then living should not pass away "until all these things be accomplished."[1] Although the exact hour is not specified, the end is so near that Christians of that day are warned to be ready at a moment's notice. Every sentence in this description breathes keen expectancy, and the whole clearly reflects the perilous conditions of those ancient times. Premillennialists, however, are unable to take serious account of this vital setting. According to their program the period of great tribulation is still an affair of the future. Hence they insist that New Testament language be divorced from its original historical situation and revised in meaning to suit hypothetical conditions as yet unrealized after the lapse of more than eighteen centuries.

By ignoring the historical setting of the Book of Revelation, this portion of the New Testament is also subjected to much perversion of meaning. The use which is made of John's references to the persecuting emperor will

[1] Mark 13:30.

suffice for illustration. John and his fellow-Christians were enduring sore afflictions for their refusal to participate in the worship of the emperor, whose cult was being vigorously enforced in Western Asia Minor. The staunch faith and the lively imagination of John rise to the occasion. He pictures a glorious triumph of God when the Roman emperor and his priest, the entire Roman Empire and all Satanic powers, will perish utterly before the onslaught of the heavenly hosts with Christ at their head. In order to strengthen the confidence of his fellow-sufferers, John discloses the name of the last emperor veiled in the number 666, and predicts the speedy coming of destruction upon this ruler.[1] The renewed confidence and comfort which these bold words of assurance brought to John's contemporaries may easily be imagined.

When twentieth-century premillennial fancy appropriates the language of the primitive Christian seer, his words take on an entirely new meaning. He is said to have had no real concern either with the persecuting emperor or with the relief of his fellow-Christian sufferers.

[1] See above, p. 149.

On the contrary, we are asked to believe that he had primarily in mind the mythical figure of a great champion of evil, the Antichrist, whose appearance in history was to take place more than two thousand years later. Sometimes an effort is made to discover this Antichrist by equating the number 666 with some pope, with Mohammed, or with some other individual supposed to be a unique embodiment of wickedness. But unless the end of the world immediately follows—and it never does—the identification has to be abandoned, for with the work of the real Antichrist the present course of history must be concluded. The difficulty is evaded by suggesting that these alleged evil characters are "types," but the real person designated by John still remains to be discovered. And John's emphatic assertions regarding the imminence of the end are made a message to our day rather than to his own afflicted contemporaries. His primary aim was not to comfort them with the promise of speedy relief, but to provide a millennial program for the twentieth century. When his language is recast to suit this end, numerous perversions of his meaning become inevitable.

III

If modern premillenarianism perverts biblical teaching and yet if the millennial hope is actually present in the Bible, how is this biblical teaching to be estimated in modern times? In the first place, it should be remembered that the Bible offers, not a single millennial program, but a series of hopes emerging at different periods in the evolution of Hebrew, Jewish, and Christian history. One type of hope is framed to meet the needs of a primitive age in pre-exilic times. With the experiences resulting from the exile, Hebrew hopes take on new forms of expression, and their content is transformed to meet changed conditions. This process of evolution continues in Maccabean and in Roman times as the apocalyptic writers create new imagery and depict a new type of kingdom of God to come upon the earth.

Christian views show similar, though less extensive, variation. Immediately after Jesus' death his disciples depicted an early return of their master to inaugurate a new age. But presently they recast their first hope in order to allow a place for their gentile missionary propaganda. Then as time passed they began to find at least a partial and preliminary realiza-

tion of their hopes within the new movement which Jesus had instituted while upon earth. The author of the Fourth Gospel placed so much stress upon the significance of Jesus' earthly work that the demand for a returning Christ became much less imperative. But the majority of Christians still looked to the near future for some climactic display of God's saving work. Times of persecution stimulated new interest in this type of speculation and resulted in such new pictures of triumph as those exhibited in the Book of Revelation.

A proper estimate of these varied hopes cannot be arrived at by means of harmonization or mutual superimposition. In producing any such composite photograph the features of one image are completely obscured, another becomes so badly distorted as to be unrecognizable, and a third is given arms or legs altogether out of proportion to the rest of its anatomy. Any consistent schematizing of all biblical millennial hopes will necessarily result in a purely artificial and lifeless product. But viewed as individual expressions of opinion emerging at definite periods in history and within specific environments, the hopes of the ancients take on reality and life and are capable of being evaluated in

terms of their functional significance in ancient times. It is possible, and it might prove truly profitable, to estimate the significance for their own day of the hopes of Isaiah or Ezekiel or Daniel or Paul or Mark or the author of the Gospel of John or the seer of Revelation. These views were entertained by real people and were advanced as solutions to specific problems, and so are capable of being estimated in terms of their value to the ancient man or in terms of their value to moderns. In the same way the views of the modern millennialist, being his own peculiar possession, have their significance for him. But biblical teaching as a hypothetical unit never had any significance to anyone, for no one person—at least no person in his right mind—ever did or ever can truly entertain all of these various opinions at one and the same moment in history.

The millennial type of hope in its different forms was often of great worth to the ancients. It helped them to maintain their faith in the triumph of righteousness at times when life's ills seemed overwhelming and no other way of escape seemed open. At crucial moments in his experience the devout believer gave wings to his imagination and formulated a program of

divine intervention phrased in language and imagery suited to his own immediate needs. An Isaiah stimulated his contemporaries to righteous living by predicting a terrible day of Jehovah when the Hebrew nation would perish, Ezekiel cheered the exiles and inculcated holiness by portraying the hope of a glorious return to Palestine. The imagery of Daniel served to strengthen the endurance of the afflicted Jews during the fierce persecutions of Antiochus. The expectation of Christ's speedy return was a mighty stimulus to activity on the part of the earliest Christians, and the extravagant imagery of Revelation was a fitting antidote to the apparently hopeless status of small Christian groups when persecuted by the mighty power of Rome. Thus millennial hopes served to interpret a wide range of experience, the details of the imagery varying from time to time according to the demands of specific individuals in different situations.

Similarly the value which an individual today attaches to any form of ancient hope depends ultimately upon its functional significance in modern times. The mere passage of time has rendered large portions of the biblical imagery untenable for moderns. The restoration of

nomadic ethical ideals among the Hebrews, the return of the dispersed Jews from Babylonia or Egypt to Palestine, or the destruction of the Seleucid Empire cannot become the center of faith and hope today. The return of Christ can no longer be expected during the lifetime of certain of his earthly associates, nor can the overthrow of the Roman Empire constitute a vital element in the modern hope. As a matter of fact, today no specific form of biblical hope can be exactly reproduced with all its original details, which in most instances were just the features giving it peculiar value to the ancients. To be sure, one who chooses to do so may construct a new form of hope employing selected phrases and imagery from the Bible, and such a hope may have value for its modern creator, but it cannot be identified with any specific form of biblical hope.

Although biblical forms of millennial hope are no longer tenable, the faith and sincerity of the ancients who proposed these solutions for the evils of the world are still both suggestive and inspiring. Nor is confidence in the victory of righteousness to be abandoned simply because past generations have failed to plot accurately the devious itinerary of the tri-

umphal procession down through the ages. It was a perfectly normal procedure for the worthies of old to phrase their message as they did. They were but using current language which made possible the concrete expression of their own experiences and enabled them to convey to their contemporaries vivid representations of their faith, sincerity, and consecration. To admit that we of today no longer find it possible to speak their language is not to deny their value for our times. Indeed, if the interpreters of modern life were to learn well the lessons of initiative, diligence, and consecration exemplified by the ancients, the contribution of biblical millennialists to present-day problems would be far greater than it ever can be through any mere parrot-like appropriation of ancient millennial imagery.

IV

Since biblical hopes are incapable of being literally reproduced, shall moderns seek a solution for the evils of the present age in a new form of millennial speculation? Or shall they adopt outright a positively constructive policy of world-betterment? In other words, shall we still look for God to introduce a new order

by catastrophic means or shall we assume the responsibility of bringing about our own millennium, believing that God is working in us and in our world to will and to work for his good pleasure?

The modern man has various reasons for doubting the validity of present-day reconstructions of millennial hopes. In the first place, mistrust is aroused by the utter failure of all past millennial programs to produce promised results. Whether among Gentiles, Jews, or Christians, all predictions of the end of the world have failed of fulfilment. The new world-year of Babylonian expectations has not materialized, the Persian hope of a new age is long overdue, and the Golden Age of Graeco-Roman fancy remains unrealized. A similar fate has overtaken Hebrew hopes. The older prophets looked in vain for the restoration of ideal nomadic conditions in Palestine. The anticipated glories of the restored exiles as pictured by later prophets came no nearer to realization. The apocalyptic visionary was never privileged to see his impending kingdom of heaven established upon earth. Tragic disappointment awaited those enthusiastic Jewish nationalists who revolted against Rome in the

hope of bringing Jehovah to their aid. As time and experience rendered earlier hopes untenable it was a magnificent faith that prompted the afflicted Israelites to paint new pictures of coming deliverance. One may well admire their unbounded confidence in God, even though they misjudged his intentions for the future and were slow to learn from the signs of the times that his purposes in history were to be worked out in a much less spectacular manner than they had frequently imagined.

All early Christian millennial expectations have similarly miscarried. Paul was disappointed in his hope of living to see the day of the Lord, nor did the promised end of the world speedily arrive to relieve his converts of their distresses. Christians of Mark's day were equally overzealous in supposing that Christ would return in apocalyptic glory while certain of his earthly companions were still alive. Similarly fanciful were the well-meant efforts of the writer of Revelation to cheer persecuted Christians with the promise of Christ's speedy coming to destroy the oppressor and reward the faithful. In the course of the years Christians did possess themselves of the Mediterranean world, triumphing completely over their

heathen persecutors, but in a very different manner from that anticipated by the author of Revelation. There is something grand about these early sufferers' faith in the triumph of their cause, even though they would have impatiently forced the issue instead of awaiting the gradual evolution of the divine purposes as disclosed in subsequent history.

The millennial speculations of later Christian history only increase one's distrust of all attempts to determine times and seasons, or to secure permanent relief by catastrophic means. History always denies the expectation of the end, and all fresh predictions are automatically invalidated when the hour for their fulfilment arrives. Whether it is an Irenaeus, an Augustine, or any of their successors who turns prophet, the result is always the same. And yet even today some Christians continue to pursue the millennial mirage, vainly looking for a catastrophic end of the world instead of throwing themselves heart and soul into the task of improving the existing order, whose permanence is attested by centuries of disappointed millennial hopes.

A second item discrediting millennial expectations in the eyes of the modern world is the

fanciful content of these hopes. As children delight in fairy stories and draw no sharp distinction between fact and fancy, so primitive peoples gave free reign to their imagination as they depicted ideal conditions in the distant past or the glories of a new age yet to come. It is not surprising that Gentiles, Jews, and early Christians in the ancient world all resorted to fancy as the chief means of giving definite and attractive form to their future hopes. In those days elevated emotion and pious imagination were standard instruments for measuring religious knowledge whether of the past or of the future. But times have changed. Today religious fancy must submit to the factual restraints of scientific sanity if it would not become discredited among thoughtful people. However interesting these fancies may be as products of ardent faith, they can no longer be accepted as actual facts.

In millennial expectations, however, unrestrained fancy plays a leading rôle. The ancient prophets depicted the speedy advent of an imaginary day of Jehovah as the hour of the nation's doom. In post-exilic times a new series of images was created to visualize the anticipated joys of the restored captives. The

materials for these pictures were either appropriated from current mythology or were produced by new flights of the imagination. The same process was continued by the apocalyptic writers. Often stimulated by highly wrought emotions, their fancy soared to new heights, painting for itself magnificent pictures of heaven and of the heavenly kingdom soon to be established upon earth. The early Christian seer follows in the footsteps of his Jewish predecessor, except that he strives to attain new visions of a more gorgeous character. These ancient efforts to portray the future are not hampered by any restraints of a modern type. Apparently it never occurs to the seer to ask whether the hard facts of history furnish warrant for his conclusions. Indeed, the farther his imagery transcends the known facts of actual experience, the stronger is its appeal to the imagination of himself and his contemporaries.

The same unrestrained exercise of fancy characterizes all later millennial speculation. The mythical creations of earlier days are freely reproduced and supplemented by new flights of the imagination. These fancied pictures are boldly exhibited as realizable fact, and modern

men are asked to portray the kingdom of God in the extravagant imagery of primitive times. Apparently the failure of past hopes never wakens a suspicion that the fabric which new fancy creates will one day similarly vanish into thin air. In the meantime one depicts in truly mythological fashion the coming of a day when God, Christ, and the angels will appear upon earth as realistically as ever Homer's gods descended from Mount Olympus. And the delights of the Elysian fields were never more vividly portrayed than are the joys of the righteous on the day of admission to their luxurious apartments in the New Jerusalem of millennial expectation.

A third objection to millennial fancies as advocated by modern premillenarianism arises from their inherent pessimism. The story of man's career upon earth is viewed as one long process of deterioration from the days of Adam until the day of final doom. Life's ills seem altogether too gigantic to be overcome by mere human endeavor, and even with such divine aid as mankind has experienced no gradual process of reform can issue successfully. Each hour in the world's history must be darker than the one that came before, nor can any power,

human or divine, dispel this gathering gloom. Although God is supposed to have intervened to help humanity at certain times in the past, such occurrences have been sporadic and anticlimactic. The course of history quickly descended to lower levels and the world as a whole has been growing constantly worse.

Even religion does not escape the premillenarian's pessimism. He scorns all efforts made in the name of religion to correct the ills of society. Society must not be redeemed; it must be damned. The ban is also placed upon all intellectual efforts to become more accurately acquainted with the universe as a means of reading God's thoughts after him. The quintessence of religion is made to consist in assent to the fanciful premillennial program, and those Christians who refuse such assent are assigned to the outer court, where they are more or less under the dominion of Satan. In fact the church itself is believed to be growing constantly more worldly as the present age draws to a close. To inaugurate any program of social betterment or to set the church as a whole upon an upward course would be to thwart the divine purposes and to delay the advent of Christ. Both the world and the church must grow

constantly worse in order to meet premillennial ideals. Viewed from this standpoint, the essential function of religion is to insure for a few select individuals a way of escape from the ultimate wrack and ruin to which the world is destined.

This pessimistic outlook upon life is a violent anachronism in the modern world. It belongs to a prescientific age when primitive thinking derived the imagery for its expression from a purely mythological interpretation of the universe. Mythology always glorifies the past or the future at the expense of the present, and it was to mythology that the ancient man commonly turned for his philosophy of history and of life. But today, in all circles dominated by the modern scientific spirit, a different state of affairs prevails. The course of world-history is interpreted in terms of carefully observed facts revealing an evolutionary process of development, and in the light of this new knowledge premillennial pessimism is no longer tenable.

To be more specific, it is sheer nonsense to talk dolefully about the gradual deterioration of society to a student of history familiar with the actual course of human development

from prehistoric times down to the present. This course of history exhibits one long process of evolving struggle by which humanity as a whole rises constantly higher in the scale of civilization and attainment, bettering its condition from time to time through its greater skill and industry. Viewed in the long perspective of the ages, man's career has been one of actual ascent. Instead of growing worse, the world is found to be growing constantly better.

The historian's conviction of cosmic progress and permanence is further substantiated by the findings of the physical scientist. He too discovers a gradual process in the course of the world's development extending over countless millenniums, and the laws of his science enable him to predict the continuance of the physical universe for still millions of years. Scientific knowledge leaves no room for the retention of primitive mythical fancies regarding a cataclysmic end of the world.

Since history and science show that betterment is always the result of achievement, man learns to surmise that evils still unconquered are to be eliminated by strenuous effort and gradual reform rather than by the catastrophic intervention of Deity. Modern scientific think-

ing is fundamentally optimistic in its outlook upon the world's future. It neither ignores the ills of life nor minimizes their severity. But it hopefully proceeds to effect their elimination. Instead of assuming an attitude of passive submission awaiting a day when all evil is to be destroyed by a cosmic catastrophe, it takes active measures to accomplish present relief. Disease is to be cured or prevented by the physician's skill, society's ills are to be remedied by education and legislation, and international disasters are to be averted by establishing new standards and new methods for dealing with the problems involved. In short, the ills of life are to be cured by a gradual process of remedial treatment rather than by sudden annihilation.

The function of religion in this program is also remedial. Its aim is not simply to extricate a few individual souls from the débris of a perishing world. The more positive and comprehensive task of religion, as scientifically understood, is to stimulate successive generations throughout unnumbered centuries to aim at the highest moral and spiritual attainment of which men in all future ages may find themselves capable. This outlook demands much

strenuous endeavor and may entail many discouragements ere the gigantic task is accomplished, but it leaves no room for pessimism of the premillennial type.

On the other hand, the retention of a vain hope of catastrophic world-renewal begets indifference, if not actual hostility, toward all remedial agencies designed to improve the present order of existence by a gradual process of inner reform. The premillennialist will labor strenuously to rescue individual souls, but he has no lively interest in removing the causes that lead souls astray, nor has he any faith in the efficacy of preventive measures. Were he to recognize their value or success, his fond conviction that the world is doomed to grow constantly worse would have to be abandoned. He therefore gives himself to the temporary duty of refitting a few derelicts for further voyaging upon the sea of life, and refuses to participate in the larger and more important work of so reforming conditions of navigation upon life's ocean that the causes of shipwreck will be reduced to a minimum, if not indeed ultimately eliminated.

The pessimistic philosophy of life which underlies premillennial teaching is especially to be deplored at the present time. It is always

a sad day for humanity when any group of religious people spurns, as premillennialists are in principle compelled to do, all serious effort to secure the betterment of the world by means of popular education, social reforms, remedial legislation, or other agencies for improving undesirable conditions of life and attaining higher ideals of social righteousness. But this negative attitude becomes peculiarly vicious in the present hour of the world's need, when the call to duty is no longer merely local, but nation-wide and international.

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